

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1327781

THINGS NEW AND OLD

PROFESSOR KNIGHT



The Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT

WEST FOOTHILL AT COLLEGE AVENUE
CLAREMONT, CALIFORNIA

1st Texts her.

THINGS
NEW AND OLD.

5/- net

THINGS NEW AND OLD

BEING
SUNDAY ADDRESSES
DELIVERED AT THORNTON CASTLE
AND ELSEWHERE,

BY
PROFESSOR KNIGHT

LONDON :
FRANCIS GRIFFITHS,
34, MAIDEN LANE, STRAND, W.C.
1909.

Theology Library
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

TO HIS GRACE
THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
IN ADMIRATION OF HIS WORK
AS A
CHRISTIAN TEACHER
AND AN
ECCLESIASTICAL STATESMAN,
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

PREFACE.

These Addresses require only a brief prefatory note.

During several years the late Sir Thomas Thornton asked me, while his guest in Kincardineshire, to deliver Addresses to those who assembled for Religious Service on Autumn Sunday evenings in the Pavilion near his residence. To his request I gladly acceded, although I had for nearly twenty years given up my old work in that direction except when I addressed the boys at Fettes College Chapel, or the women-students at some Colleges in England and America.

My acquaintance with Sir Thomas dated from the year 1862, as I have mentioned in a book written in 1905, called *A Biographical Sketch with Reminiscences*, and published by Mr. William Kidd, Dundee. In that volume, however, I could not say much about one characteristic of my friend, viz., his religious nature, and his love for the Services of his Church. When he purchased the castle in which he lived during his later years, he instituted a series of Sunday Evening Services for the benefit of his tenant-farmers, their families, and work-people, as well as for any in the district who cared to attend them, along with himself and his guests. These Services were conducted by clergy of various denominations, as well as by occasional visitors. Whenever I

spent a Sunday with him, he asked me to conduct the Service and address the people, as the castle is some distance from the nearest place of worship.

When I agreed to the publication of these Addresses, I added several others, most of which he had heard when I lived and taught in Dundee. He often urged me to publish them, when I was unable to do so. Being engrossed with other work, it seemed best to leave these fragments of the past, which had not been written for publication, in the obscurity into which they had necessarily fallen. Advancing years, however, with one's face now turned "towards the sunset," have led me to comply with his request, and to put a few of them together; more especially as sixteen of my seventy-two years were devoted to clerical life and work.

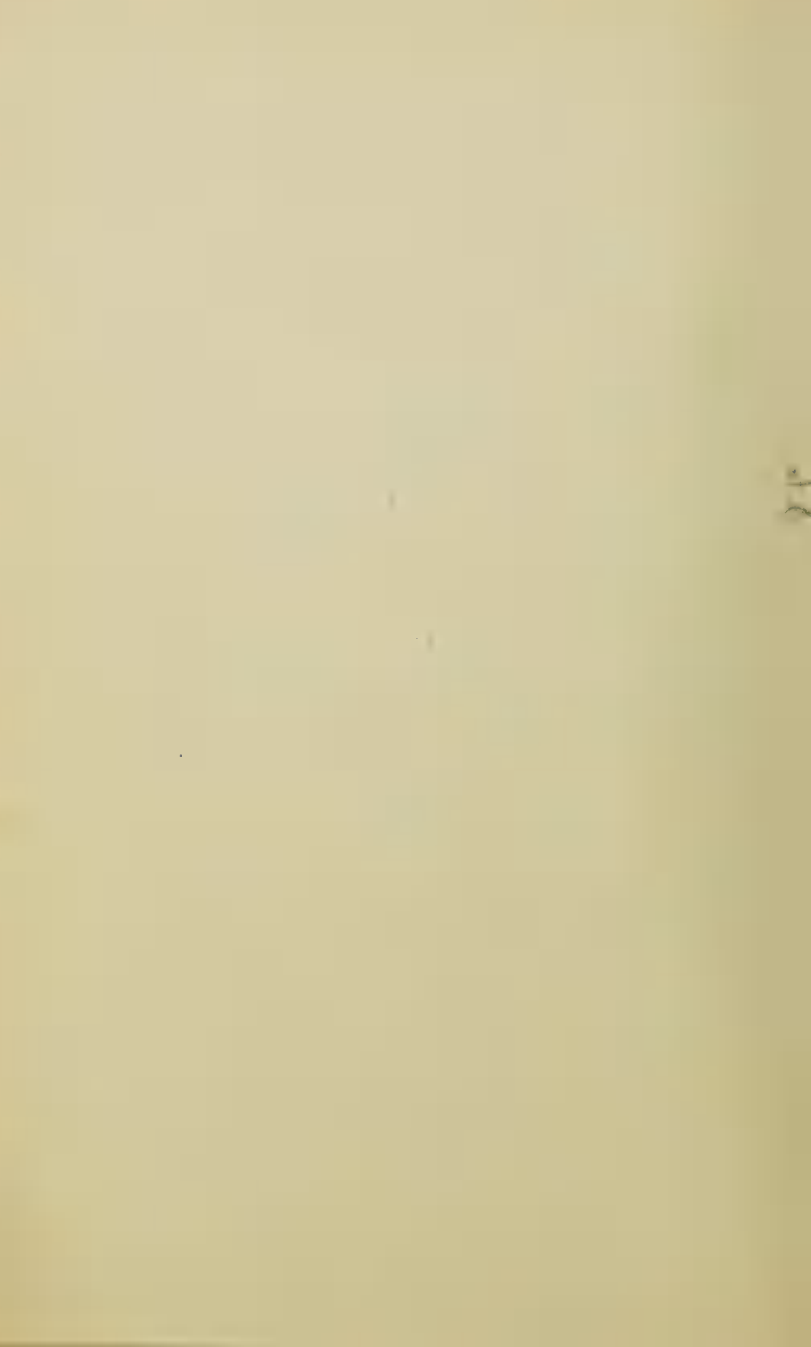
I have also included one address delivered in the year 1872, to the audience that used to assemble in Dr. Martineau's Church, Little Portland Street, London; and two that were printed in a volume of *Scots Sermons*, in the year 1880.

Those selected have been chosen because they refer less to transient aspects of religious truth, than to its lasting phases; and deal not so much with temporary interests, as with the duties, aspirations and ideals, that do not alter with the changing years.

WILLIAM KNIGHT.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE.
1.—SEEKING AFTER GOD	I
2.—SEEKING AFTER GOD (continued)	10
3.—CONSERVATION AND CHANGE	18
4.—CONSERVATION AND CHANGE (continued)	27
5.—THE CONTINUITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION	37
6.—THE CONTINUITY AND DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION (continued)	47
7.—THE OLD AND THE NEW	57
8.—THE OLD AND THE NEW (continued)	63
9.—THE COMMUNION SERVICE	70
10.—THE COMMUNION SERVICE (continued)	82
11.—THE POWER OF PRAYER	100
12.—THE POWER OF PRAYER (continued)	109
13.—THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN	117
14.—THE NATURE OF POSSESSION	128
15.—SOME USES OF SCRIPTURE... ..	136
16.—THE VOICES OF THE WORLD	145
17.—THE GLORY OF THE LORD	153
18.—TREASURES THAT ENDURE	166
19.—THE TEN COMMANDMENTS	172
20.—THE CONQUEST OF EVIL	183
21.—SPENDING ; SAVING ; GIVING	191
22.—SELF-SEARCH AND SELF-CONTROL	200
23.—THE UNKNOWN GOD	207



I.

Seeking after God.*

In the Book of Job, chapter xxiii., verse 3, it is written :—"Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to his seat."

To this longing there is no immediate or direct response. In succeeding sentences we only hear an echo of the question again and again reverberated. The speaker is utterly dissatisfied with the theory of Providence which his friends have put before him, and in his present mood of mind he cannot discover any data out of which to construct a theodicy of his own. With the utmost unreserve he records his passing thoughts, and the fluctuations of experience. The Divine Nature seems to him an inscrutable abyss, and Providence a dark enigma. He virtually says that man cannot know the nature of the Infinite, or approach Him with recognition. He can but follow the earthly light he has, and wait patiently in the darkness.

This is merely a temporary stage in the unfolding of the great drama of experience, which the author of this book—with such graphic art—portrays. But there is no expression of mingled longing and bewilderment, in all these rich monologues of the Eastern sage, which awakens so deep a response in our particular era, as

*As originally written, this Address is too long for re-production as a whole. It is therefore now divided into two sections, as is the case with Addresses II.—V.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

that embodied in the phrase, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even unto his seat." And although much within this book is strange to our modern eyes,—the absence of the old bright sense of God's presence being traced back to some arbitrary displeasure, and the words of remonstrance with which He is appealed to sounding harshly in our ears,—we may learn wisdom from the record of that struggle, and the gropings of the theology which were inevitable in the youth of the world. It was characterised by a directness and simplicity which we miss in some of the maturer systems of the world's adolescence. While, therefore, Job pours forth his heart in strange soliloquies, and then addresses God in pleadings that seem more appropriate to an earthly court of justice than to one seeking an audience with Heaven, while he replies to the friends who came to counsel him—these shallow, garrulous and crude advisers—at times in the language of irritation, and again of pointed sarcasm, we may not measure his utterances by the standard of modern restraint. Even in these "confessions of an enquiring spirit," half-meditative, half-devotional, in which he calls upon God with the familiarity of the mystic,—appeals, expostulates, and entreats, as if holding a colloquy with some one close at hand,—he does so merely in the style of the East. There is neither irreverence, nor lack of humility, in his heart. He is seeking One whose presence he misses, in whose fellowship he used to rejoice, and whom he desires again to find. His spirit is making solemn quest for the absent yet besetting God, in whose existence he cannot disbelieve even at those moments when he has no realisation of his presence. Repeatedly he gropes his way, as if amid the shadows of an unsubstantial land; but, even

SEEKING AFTER GOD

when he is uttering those mournful words, expressive of the conscious blank within him, you see that he is carrying in his heart unawares a rudiment of faith in the Divine Being whom he seeks.

It is clear that neither Job, nor his three friends, nor Elihu, the interlocutor who comes in at the close to arbitrate amongst the disputants, were able to look upon the universe as one great whole, its varied forces acting and reacting upon each other endlessly, and its laws all tending to one result; the moral and material aspects of it being but the separate manifestations of one and the same principle within. Of necessity every mind in that age looked merely at isolated aspects of the moral universe, and individualized Providence: and this book of Job, a religious poem of the East, gives us a dramatic delineation of the notions of the mind and the longings of the heart of primitive men, feeling after God and conversing with Him, as they search for such a theory of his administration as will explain the mysteries of Providence. They seek mainly for some explanation of that great problem of the ages, with which the thoughtful have wrestled—the chief difficulty in the way of a rational theology,—viz., the unequal distribution of the areas of evil and of suffering, the prosperity of the wicked, and the temporal disaster of the noblest and the best of men. But the result of the whole book is a vindication of the reality and worth of Religion, even when the providential order of the world is obscure, and evidence of the Divine Character is for the time being indistinct or evanescent.

It would be rash to say that our own era is more bereft of faith in the Divine Presence than those which have preceded it. Possibly, had we the eye to see into their

THINGS NEW AND OLD

deeper phases, and to gauge their unmanifested troubles, all ages are pretty much alike in this. Only now we hear it more explicitly avowed. The centre of religious controversy has changed, and the immediate question of the hour touches the very root of all Religion. Scientific men, the teachers of this generation, proclaim their inability to find God anywhere: and the general air is filled with kindred half-expressed complainings. We miss, however, some of the peculiar sorrow to which this experience so often gave rise of old. The extreme pain, which this ancient seeker after light endured, is in marked contrast to the contentment and acquiescence of the modern mind before *its* conscious blank of experience. Those who perceive no recognisable Essence beyond the fleeting and the perishable are serene and satisfied, compared with many of their fathers who were similarly situated. The heart of the oriental is here smitten with keen anguish; and in his bewilderment he is ill at ease. He looks on the right hand, but the object of his search is not to be found: he turns to the left, but he cannot perceive Him: he goes forward, but he does not behold Him: he looks backward, but He is still hidden from his sight. It is like the sad and sudden feeling of orphanhood in early youth, intensified by the memories of a bright home, and the filial joys that are no more.

It may seem remarkable that so little progress has been made, since this experience was recorded, towards an absolute settlement of this first article of religious belief; so as to put it into the category of axiomatic first truths, and to fix it beyond question as an indisputable verity, a truth of which no man can doubt, as well as the imperishable treasure of the human heart. We might have thought that this at least would be "light lightening

SEEKING AFTER GOD

every man coming into the world," without the possibility of an eclipse, or of the "darkness comprehending it not." But, lo! new systems of thought which deal with it have risen and fallen, and opinion has swayed hither and thither; acting and re-acting, forming, developing, then disintegrating, in seemingly endless succession; like the ceaseless flow of the tides, or the annual birth and death of Nature.

One explanation is, that men have been dissatisfied with the partial glimpses vouchsafed to them, and the limited knowledge possible; and have formulated their little light into a rounded system, with a series of propositions often unverifiable even to themselves; and have insisted that their inadequate solutions should be adequate for all their contemporaries, and also for generations to come. Worse than that, many in the next generation have too often accepted the tradition of their fathers, not as a lamp to guide them while waiting for new disclosures, but as a bequest from the past, oracular and exhaustive. They have sometimes failed to discern God as their own God, by thinking of Him mainly as the God of their fathers; and in seeking Him they have sought for the living amongst dead memories, and ancient splendours of manifestation. Now no formula regarding the Divine Nature can possibly be exhaustive of the Infinite Reality, or even adequate as an intellectual chart to every age. In this matter, indeed, the healthy mind will oscillate between two opposite poles of experience. There is on the one hand a desire, deep-seated in the soul, to possess as accurately defined a creed as is competent to man regarding the Infinite One. On the other, there is a profound conviction of the inadequacy of every definition, with the feeling that the sense of an

THINGS NEW AND OLD

adorable Presence "besetting us before and behind," revealing itself and again withdrawing, is worthier and more reverential than any attempt to define it could be: just as the heart feels that its deepest adoration transcends all utterance, and is only perfected in silence. Still the reason must always work behind the language of the heart, and elaborate its forms expressive of ultimate mysteries, defining, so far as it can, what is obscure, and consolidating what is vague. Thus reason comes to the aid of our theology, and indeed creates its intellectual forms; which, instead of being fetters, are the very girders of its strength.

There is, for example, a very crude type of religious aspiration, found sometimes amongst the devoutest mystics, a longing to retain the Divine Presence before the inner eye of thought, in a manner which reason disallows, inasmuch as it would blot out the vision of all else besides. It would tend to the confusion of the creature, and his absorption in the Divine Essence, while the soul attained to a sort of unearthly ecstasy. To desire the presence of the Divine Being as a ceaselessly obtruded fact of consciousness, is to desire the very extinction or collapse of that consciousness itself. To know God at all, we must, at the same time, and in the self-same act, know man. The vision of the One is only possible along with the vision of the manifold. The recognition of the Infinite and of the finite go together; while the attempt to realise the Divine alone would crush the spirit of him who strove after its realisation. The dominancy of that one thought, the close pressure of the infinite Presence, would extinguish the life of the thinker and contemplator. Therefore, our commerce with the creature,

SEEKING AFTER GOD

by intellectual vision and emotive touch, is a help towards the more adequate realization of, and communion with, the Highest. Our sense of God is not keenest when the creature is utterly forgotten, and the mind caught away into the third heaven of sightless ecstasy, but it is most vivid when He is discerned at the heart of Nature, as the interior pulse of all its forces, as well as the architect of its forms, the inner spirit of its beauty, as well as the director of its laws, as the other life within our own lives, as well as the guide of our earthly pilgrimage.

But these suggestions of God's presence are not darted into the soul with uniform persistency, at stated times and seasons; nor can we put the soul into such a posture as to create them, or even poise it so as to catch the free and passing inspiration. The Divine breeze bloweth when and where it listeth, proclaiming its divinity by so doing; and it affords one of the most striking confirmations to the mind of the worshipper that *Another* is appealing to him, that he is in the presence of one who is kindred, yet infinitely greater—before whom he is as nothing, and yet in that nothingness is cared for—that He thus darts the suggestions of his presence upon him from afar, and so often unexpectedly. The revelation is too vast, and too divine, to become a permanent and familiar experience of the soul. God is revealed through casual and repeated acts, in many fugitive glimpses; but the belief in One whom we can discern, and may rationally adore, strengthens with every new disclosure, and his presence grows clearer at every fresh apocalypse.

There are two facts which a study of the human soul, and of the outer universe, suggests; both of them of equal significance as affording the data of a true theology,

THINGS NEW AND OLD

and alike necessary to sustain the life of piety in the heart. The one is the kindredness of God to man : and the other is his transcendency, and immeasurable unlikeness. To dwell overmuch or overlong on the kindredness, and the communion which it permits and fosters, will lower religion to familiar talk, and breed irreverence. But to dwell on the transcendency of God, and his unlikeness to the soul that thinks and worships Him, will gradually merge religion in barren contemplation, will turn it into cold mental glances, and ossify the very heart of piety. From our close connection with the earth, we need a constant stimulus to the life of devotion ; and it is the sense of divine affinity between the creature and the Creator that alone supplies it. Nay, more, all the zest, the brightness, the serenity, and interior joy of this mundane life must vanish with the victory of that system of thought which proclaims the infinite difference, and magnifies the eternal chasm between the creature and the Universal Life. What human interests would survive beyond the monotonous register of facts (similar or dissimilar), the stale collection of the statistics of mutability, if the inner eye saw no Vision, and the ear heard no Voice, and the heart apprehended no kindred Being whom it could name without irreverence.

Now, listen to the language of the heart when least sophisticated ; not in its rude accents amongst savage men, or in lands untutored by civilisation ; but in its ripest and most disciplined phases, when it is unartificial and unconstrained ; not crushed by the stronger intellect, or overpowered by the nimbler fancy. Let it be allowed to bear its *spontaneous* witness, and it will be heard to speak when the reason itself is dumb ; and perhaps to leap up of a sudden to the front of all the culture of an

SEEKING AFTER GOD

age, and lead it. We shall then hear it speak of One whom it apprehends in the very act of revealing Himself. For there are choice moments in the life of man when the soul almost emerges from its prison-house of flesh, and is privileged to perceive the greatest of realities behind the veil of sense, as vividly as the eye perceives material forms, and colours, and motions. These rare seasons, are, as a great poet calls them,

“ high hours
“ Of visitation from the living God,”

but they cannot possibly be permanent. From their very nature they must quickly evanesce; and that not because they arise from our own efforts to idealise what is, but because they are due to the action of Another over us, to the influence of the Divine Mind upon the human. They are not even due to the uprise of our spirits towards his by any act of will, but to the sudden descent of his Spirit from above, to the apparition of the Divine through the clouds which open, and close again. But while they last, they attest the fact that another Mind and Heart has approached and moulded ours. They tell us that we have been privileged to draw near to a vaster Personality, and to feel the mystic touch of his Presence besetting us as really as that of our fellowmen who breathe and speak, and influence us by word and deed. To this subject we shall return again.

Now unto Him, etc.

II.

Seeking after God.

(CONTINUED).

In the Book of Job, chapter xxiii., verse 3, it is written :—" Oh, that I knew where I might find Him, that I might come even to his seat."

RELIGIOUS men have always felt—while the Church has told of it in its psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs—that in those hours in which God reveals Himself, the presence of their brethren with whom they hold intercourse in articulate speech, is not more but less real to them, than is that Infinite Mind whose language they have understood by inward listening. They have told us that when undisturbed by any vocal medium, their recognition of the silent Mind is keenest ; and that the love they rejoice in on the earth is but the poorest shadow of that divine affection which has made the soul blessed with emotion, and filled the inner eye with radiant light. They cannot tell us more. Why should they be asked for more ; for the definition of an ultimate reality ; for a description in words of what is holiest in the heart of man ? These things are impossible. Nevertheless, they confidently assure us that they feel One near at hand, within them and around, not as an unknown power, but as the central life, and light, and joy of all. They feel—quite as much as those who teach it as exclusive truth—that the great Reality is utterly transcendent ; but that, in attempting at other moments to describe it, and then clothing the limitless One with human characteristics, they know that they are using an imperfect

SEEKING AFTER GOD

medium for the purpose. Speech and definition always fail us at the last. But the fact that all our efforts to describe the Infinite, and to define the Absolute, are felt to be inadequate is a direct proof that the Essence—then described and thus defined, is not unknown, but is known to transcend, and is realised by the heart in far clearer outline than any secondary reproduction of it in a proposition, or through a symbol, could ever make it out.

This, then, is the characteristic feature of that knowledge of God which is an authentic and permanent possession of the race, while the notions which men form of Him arise, and change, and die. All the "men of God" have recognised Him as a Revealer; and have held that God "doth talk with man" (as Moses put it), "and he liveth;" while their attempt to describe Him as "Lord," "King," Shepherd," "Guardian," "Father," as the "I am," the "Infinite and the Eternal," as the "Ancient of days," as the "Cause of causes," or the "Light of the soul," and the "Life of men," are so many conceptions gathered from the symbols of the earth, adequate and yet inadequate; sufficient as the steps of a ladder are sufficient in rising to a height, insufficient as an exhaustive account of an infinite essence. They partially satisfy the mind; they fix its wandering notions, help it to retain its old experience, and to recall its vanished thoughts. And if they do not wholly satisfy the reason, they always aid the heart, at these moments of instinctive worship, when adoration starts its hymn.

But there is more than this first testimony to the presence of Another and a Greater, with whom the spirit holds communion. God is revealed within the soul as a

THINGS NEW AND OLD

Legislator there. The eye of the conscience looks with immediate vision on One whose moral lustre no material eye can discern. And how is this? Looking around him, man feels that he is environed, hemmed in, and helplessly enchained by physical laws. But looking within, he feels that he is not so. He finds that he is endowed with a power of moral origination, of doing or of refraining. At the very point where duty commands him to act, he reaches the parting of the moral ways. He finds that he is there and then left free to act. Instead of being helplessly under fate, he is his own fate-maker. And does not the cessation of necessity, the absence of compulsion, *just at this very point*, imply that Another has endowed us with that freedom, and has relaxed in our behoof the links of that chain with which He has bound up the processes of nature. If our wills are free, they are not a mere development of prior forces. They are creative originating sources, pointing surely to One who has fashioned them in his image. The moral freedom of the creature thus bears witness at once to his dependence on a Higher, and to his independence of the lower. It is the independent function of the dependent being: independent, because not the product of anterior forces; dependent, because the voice which legislates within proclaims the moral vassalage of the creature.

What then is the force of that voice of Conscience which is the light and the lawgiver of the free-will? It is not a mere authoritative mandate,—“This shall be done.” It is a Divine appeal,—“This *ought* to prevail.” It is not like a voice of thunder, crushing the will and extorting obedience. It is rather the persuasive voice of admonition and entreaty. And this is the Word of that living Providence which besets us before and behind.

SEEKING AFTER GOD

It is a voice most truly "in us, yet not of us." It speaks without our calling on it, and will not be silenced by any entreaty of ours. Do we then create it? or has the accumulated experience of ages, the inherited tendency of many generations, given rise to it? If so, we should expect it to be uniform in its verdicts, and so clear in its utterance that it could always be calculated upon, and dealt with as we deal with the fixed and indubious rules of Nature. But, lo! it appears and it disappears. If slighted, it retires; and is not heard again in precisely the same form of appeal. It is intensely delicate, and susceptible of more damage than the finest product of the mechanician. It has the same fugitive character that we recognise in that apocalypse of God in Nature to which we have alluded. It seems thus to tell us that One is speaking through it as his deputy (if not, rather, through it directly), to whom we are permanently, vitally, and morally related; and that when the God within us is slighted, the Divinity divinely retires. The extreme subtlety—the delicate edge or moral fringe of the conscience—is a peculiar feature of it, which could never have been produced by development out of dissimilar states and conditions. Its fugitive splendours, its quick surprises, its mute appeals, its unearthly upbraidings, its retirement when its admonitions are slighted, and its occasional return to chide, with inextinguishable remorse; how can these, its subtlest moral phenomena, be explained as a development out of lower ancestral tendencies, with the survival of the fittest to live. And though it may tell us nothing directly of our origin, if it tells us that our spirits are the presence chambers of God's apocalypse, the places of his revelation, the sphere of his inmost agency, it gives us authentic tidings "where we may

THINGS NEW AND OLD

find Him and come even unto his seat." We cannot think of Him as absent from any part of that human nature of ours, which He has fashioned. He may be discerned in the sorrows and joys of the heart, and even in the stormiest moods of the soul. Still it may often be, that, as in the vision of the prophet, when "a great and strong wind rent the mountains and break the rocks in pieces before the Lord, the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a still, small voice;" so, when the storm of our griefs (which seems so undivine), has passed; and in the fire and the earthquake of those passions (which are so) God is not discerned, in the stillness of that inner voice which succeeds them, 'onward comes the Lord.'

But there is another way by which we may find Him, and one quite as valid, since it is consecrated to us by the worshippers of all generations. It is old, yet ever new; because it is disclosed to us through the gateway of the experiences of others. It will sometimes happen, when the heart is wearied by its failures to rise to the Transcendent, and grasp it as a reality of experience, just as it is falling back in helplessness or *ennui*, it will suddenly perceive the fact that the collective experience of the race is on its side; that devout men, the prophets and psalmists of all ages, the men of faith and of prayer have borne witness to the truth it is in search of, when burdened by the weight of a present inspiration. All inspired messengers to mankind, the heralds of the Eternal, have proclaimed as the very root of their testimony, as the one credential absolutely necessary to authenticate their message, that they were in

SEEKING AFTER GOD

direct and present intercourse with God. How could the worshippers in Israel credit the announcements made to them by the seers of that economy, who came announcing Truth in the name of the Eternal? They believed that to other souls around them a vision was vouchsafed, and an audience granted, to which they were strangers, that the veil was exceptionally withdrawn in favour of a few selected spirits.

And far above them all, illustrious as they were, we have One who revealed the Father. Other teachers—the prophets of Palestine, of Greece, and of the East—told the world of a Being to whom they stood in the attitude of devout reciprocity. He, and he alone spoke to us of the Father, “as one having authority,” the authority of experience, the authority of a Revealer. The disclosure of that fact—at which earlier teachers guessed, and after which others groped in vain—the Fatherhood of God, with all that lies within its stupendous announcement to men, is surely a most noticeable feature in his teaching. But we do not enter upon that aspect of it now. There is another equally noteworthy, and most practical, to which we turn in conclusion. It was He who said, as no other teacher had done before Him, “If a man do the will of God, he shall know.” The lawgiver of Christendom told us that it is not the contemplation of the law that will most perfectly reveal Him from whom it emanates. It is obedience to its behests, which always floods the soul with an interior light and liberty. Reflection on the rationale of the conscience, so as to discover a true theory of morals, will not disclose the facts that are revealed all silently to the obedient soul. For mere thinking reveals nothing.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

Criticism cannot open the eye of the blind. We must act and we shall know. We must keep our consciences pure, and our hearts unsullied, and walk in the way of the commandments, or we shall be blind as a mole, though we had a hundred eyes for intellectual discernment. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." That is the *via sacra*, which leads to God. Of our Lord's Divine beatitude it has been well said that "it gives the law under which this cry of Job, and of our own day is answered." For the spirit of obedience quickens the inmost perceptions of the heart. It clears the eye of the mind, and irradiates life on every side. It is surely a most rational expectation, that if the infinite Being can approach and dart his suggestions into the human finite soul, those who have learned to obey, to wait, and to expect his revelations will be blessed by these. Could we always obey, we should never miss this "real presence," and would have no occasion to utter that lament of semi-orphanhood again, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him." Then, too, our actual life of performances would be no longer—as it so often is—a satire on our ideal standard. We should not bewail the chasm between the two, and the other schisms which it breeds between the flesh, the soul, and the mind. Our spirits would remain the sanctuaries of God's presence, and his heaven would be found always within.

It is curious how inveterate is our tendency to look for Heaven above in some dim upper region, a far-off ærial plateau, or in some still more distant star; just as we begin by thinking of the throne of God above us, instead of within, where his kingdom is, and where all the insignia of his royalty should be found. But we do not

SEEKING AFTER GOD

need to ascend any turret-stair of thought to look out for Him afar; nor do we find Him only by historic retrospect, amid the archives of a wondrous race at the dawn of history; though these help us, as authentic finger-posts, to the knowledge we all need. But "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Could we live, and move, and have our being, lit up by the consciousness of that fact, all experience would wear a brighter and more benignant look. This earthly life would be felt by us to be a school in which we are being taught the nature and character of God, by and bye to give place to a higher school in which that education is to be carried on under happier auspices. Our present failures to reach this higher knowledge would contribute to the desired result, as the discords of our present life may be the prelude to a diviner harmony, when God's process of training shall be complete. Let us therefore "do God's will" with patience, and earnestness, and zeal, that we may "know of the doctrine" regarding Him, and daily remember who it was who said: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

Oh living will that shalt endure
When all that seems shall suffer shock,
Rise in the spiritual rock,
Flow through our deeds, and make them pure.

That we may lift from out of dust
A voice as unto Him that hears,
A cry above the conquered years
To one that with us works, and trust
With faith that comes of self-control,
The truths that never can be proved,
Until we close with all we loved,
And all we flow from, soul in soul.

Now unto Him, etc.

III.

Conservation and Change.

In the Second Book of Samuel, chapter xx., verses 20, 21, it is written—"Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. The matter is not so."

In the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, verse 18, it is written—"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders."

THESE two sentences taken together suggest a few thoughts on tendencies now threatening the old order of things, in Church and State alike; and affecting both secular life, and religious experience.

The saying of Joab to the wise woman of Abel, "one of the peaceable and faithful in Israel," who asked that captain of the host why he came to destroy a city, "Far be it, far be it from me that I should destroy," we may remove from its context, and take it simply as a resolution not to overthrow anything in itself good. The other sentence from Isaiah, "Violence shall be no more heard in the land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders," refers to a period in the history of the Church when the harsh spirit of destructiveness would give place to the mildness, the moderation, and sweet reasonableness of the Christian spirit; as a little further on it is said that a creative and constructive tendency would be substituted for the anarchy, collision, and dismemberment of the past. "They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."

It is usually rash for any one to say what the chief tendency of his own age is, trying to sum up, in a single

CONSERVATION AND CHANGE

proposition, so complex a thing as the spirit of a generation. For it is only at a distance, and in retrospect, that the main tendency of any epoch can be adequately measured ; when the results of agencies which once were active are seen in what they have accomplished, or failed to accomplish. On the other hand, it is not difficult to estimate some of the forces that sway contemporary thought, and guide the action of one's own time. Many of these can be most accurately known, and are most easily criticised, just as the events themselves transpire.

We are told by some that we live in an idle, empty age, devoid of heroism ; an age of weak assents, and timid compromises. There may be some truth in the assertion. But if there is, it is assuredly not the chief characteristic of our time. Other influences are at work, both numerous and subtle, which tend to break up and to destroy. Schemes are inaugurated and movements started of which the watchword is dissolution, and the successful issue of which would be the disintegration of society. If thought in many quarters is vague, latitudinarian, and indifferent ; in others the tone and temper of society is headstrong, moving blindly and turbulently forward, it knows not whither. Everywhere "the old order" is changing, "yielding place to new." While every age is a time of transition, ours seems to be one of rapid movements and continual surprises. No one who has any capacity for reading the signs of the times, can doubt that the tendency to acquiesce, and to make compromise, is not more dominant than the counter tendency to protest, to assault, and to revolutionise ; and to those who discern this fact, it becomes a question of grave moment what their relation should be to the changing spirit of their age, and to the alterations that are being wrought

THINGS NEW AND OLD

upon its current beliefs. Let us see then, whether in this, as in other things, our "moderation should not be known unto all men."

The special tendency to which I refer—a tendency swaying certain sections of society, both civil and ecclesiastical—is one which fastens instinctively upon the defects rather than upon the merits of the past, and which would destroy the Institutions which we inherit from our forefathers, because they now seem less adequate than once they were, and are somewhat injured by the wear and tear of time. And this is how it shows itself. It spends its strength in assault upon existing evils,—and sometimes in excitement for the redress of imaginary wrongs—rather than in the prudent use of circumstances, making the best of things as they are. It strives to abolish the imperfect by external assault, rather than to reform it from within by a new and higher spirit of endeavour. It is loudly affirmed in certain quarters that compromise of all kinds is an evil, that non-conformity—or the open expression of dissent from your fellow-men, when you chance to differ from them—is one of the first of duties; and that, as every party which happens to have ascendancy for a time ought to tolerate a dissentient minority, and not concuss it into acquiescence, the minority should not only claim the right of recognition, but should incessantly and even noisily assert itself, endeavouring by all the means within its reach to become the majority.

That this kind of rivalry, or struggle for existence, has its uses is undoubted; because it stirs up slumbering energy, and prevents the supineness that might otherwise characterise large masses of society. It has always been the bane of conformity that it breeds indolence,

CONSERVATION AND CHANGE

and acquiescence in things as they are, whatever they are. Narrow men of fervid temperament relish the excitements of controversy, because it supplies them with a stimulus, urging them along the bounded lines of their vocation ; while those of broader vision necessarily care less for party organisation, and the polemic schemes which agitate the masses of society. But they are singularly apt to misconstrue those movements with which they have no personal sympathy. It is well known that when clear vision is allied to a calm temperament there is a corresponding disinclination to the expression of difference, because of its accompaniments ; the disturbance, the strife, and the turmoil of controversy. This, however, may be a sign of indolence, or even of pusillanimity ; and if to teach the duty of moderation and conformity were to encourage an unreflective assent to current opinion, no matter what the opinion might be—rather than disturb society by debate—the collapse of interest in truth, and of an earnest purpose in life, would be inevitable.

Now, as in this world “all things are double one against another,” it is wise to see the weak side of a principle, even while you are magnifying it, and indicating its strength value and adequacy. Let it be admitted, therefore, that the evil of compromise is its tendency to induce intellectual lethargy, and a repose that may be cowardly. So much of truth is seen to be associated with error, so much of good to be allied with what is evil, that for the sake of the true and the good, the error and the evil are at times not only tolerated, but deemed trivial. It is notorious that the practice of assent to tradition has led to a habit of indifference. Even the virtue of catholicity has degenerated to the level of a moral weakness ; and it

THINGS NEW AND OLD

will always do so, if—while the eye is trained to discern the good—the judgment is not simultaneously disciplined to reject the evil and the erroneous. In matters both of opinion and of conduct, it is as though a soft and dreamy haze overspread the landscape, blotting out the lines which mark off one object from another ; and, however pleasant such a state of weather may be, after the blasts of controversy and the storms of debate, a very slight experience of it will lead all healthy minds to wish for a return of the east wind and the sea-breeze, which dispel the mist, and clear the firmament of its obscurities.

But then,—as the Preacher of the Exile reminded his generation—“to everything there is a season, and a time for every purpose under Heaven ; a time to destroy, and a time to build up ; a time to rend, and a time to sew ; a time of war, and a time of peace.” It would seem that the fluctuations of the weather, and the cycle of changes that occur in physical nature, are symbolic of similar periodic changes in the intellectual and moral life of men. Thus, a social revolution destroying the complacency of custom, a religious reformation breaking in upon the monotony of tradition, have their uses. They are as valuable as are those periods of slow unconscious growth, which tend to mature individual character, and to consolidate society.

In the region of belief and action, however, surely we may not accept the alterations that occur in it with the same complacency with which we receive and welcome the changes of the seasons. We are ourselves, in part, the producers of our own varying states ; and, if we inherit much from the past, we create and transmit as much to the future. We cannot, therefore, simply accept, in passive thankfulness, what the past has bequeathed to

CONSERVATION AND CHANGE

us. We must endeavour to re-fashion, as well as to assimilate, what it has brought us. And to do this aright, we must have some knowledge of the temper and spirit of our time. We must understand its drift, be aware of whence its currents flow, and whither they are tending ; if we are not to be its slaves.

Whatever its tendency, however, every wise man will welcome those changes, which are the result of the natural processes of growth—whether they are swift or slow—and resist those which are revolutionary, or rashly destructive of the past. More especially will those Institutions, which we have inherited from our forefathers, be reverently preserved, and religiously fostered. While our individual opinions are being modified by all the light which an age of critical research is accumulating, we do well to be jealous of assault upon the social Organisations which have come down to us from the past. We are as much the guardians of these as the heirs. It is the merest common-place to say that our opinions must inevitably change, that we cannot possibly conserve them in the old forms and frameworks of the past ; that modification of belief is as certain, and as necessary, as are the slower modifications of physical structure, organisation, and life. And every one should be encouraged to subject his opinions to the free air of thought, to revise his convictions continually in the light of progressive evidence, verifying them by more and more adequate tests. That is wise, wholesome, beneficent teaching ; because it is not possible for us to store up our convictions, with the view of preserving them, as exotic plants are cherished in a conservatory by artificial heat.

But, while it should be the aim of each individual that all his beliefs should be vital—and therefore that, like

THINGS NEW AND OLD

every living thing, they should change with the life of the time,—when he looks abroad he finds himself in the midst of Institutions which are the slow growth of ages. He is surrounded, in State and Church alike, by a vast and complex organisation, built up by long hereditary usage, which has ministered to the wants of many generations, and which still answers to the needs and requirements of to-day. These historic structures are, doubtless, also doomed to change. They must alter by the operation of the same laws by which they have come to be what they are. They began to change as soon as they began to exist, because inherent fixity appertains to nothing on this earth. But because they have grown and consolidated slowly, they have a proportionate claim to the homage of posterity. In no case should they be rashly touched, or rudely dealt with.

Besides, they are full of latent possibilities. There is no fixed period of youth and of age, of rise, decline and fall for Institutions, as there is for individuals. They, much more than we, may renew their youth in old age. We cannot detect the signs of decay in them, as we detect it in ancient trees or buildings, that have served their time; because in all of them there may be slumbering powers of life, and adequacy for the new and altered conditions of another age. If they are to pass away, they should be allowed to do so by the process of fulfilment and superannuation, not by external assault or undermining. The student of History knows that they will all die soon enough, without our hands helping on the process; and to make it the labour of a life, or of a party, simply to assail organisations, to be iconoclasts by profession, is little better than being incendiaries.

The wise attitude, then, towards any Institution which

CONSERVATION AND CHANGE

cannot be proved to be doing mischief is to hail the changes that are being effected upon it by the processes of internal growth and development, but not to seek its overthrow. Doubtless, the antagonism to every change, and the frequent blindness of leaders to the signs of their own times—so common in Church and State Organisations—go far to imperil their stability, and to invite the external assaults which attempt to lay them low. It is their want of elasticity, and adaptability to new conditions of existence, that has led many persons to be indifferent to their fate; and has deepened the currents of national life that flow outside their borders. But, if those who assume the office of leadership are wise in their generation, this need never happen. If they open their eyes to the necessity of adjusting the organisation to the times—as a living organism adapts itself to a new environment—it will not only survive the change, but will derive new life and inspiration from it. The social edifice, whether civil or ecclesiastical, will renew its youth; and the individual members, realising that they have only a temporary relation to the Structures into which they were born, will strive first of all to increase their efficiency, and then to transmit them to their successors as little injured as possible.

It is a frequently forgotten element in the unity and solidarity of the race, that the present generation is bound to the past, and to the future, by ties as real and vital as those which connect the different members of the race that are contemporaries now. If, therefore, I may not forget that I am only one out of many, and have no right to carry out my individual liberty to the infringement of the rights of others, neither may we who now live so assert ourselves as to infringe the rights

THINGS NEW AND OLD

of those who come after us, or demolish Structures to which our successors have as good a title as ourselves. In other words, the unity and solidarity of the race apply, not merely to the whole area of the world now ; but also to the whole history of the human family, past, present and to come. It is comparatively easy for a party, or a class, to inaugurate the work of demolition, especially if a fanatical spirit is abroad ; and so under the guise of zeal for the common good, or for the glory of God, the most venerable Structures, raised by the wisdom and piety of our forefathers, may be rudely overthrown. A revolution may accomplish in a few days the overthrow of that which it took centuries to bring to perfection ; and Structures, which have but half subserved their uses, may be levelled with the ground ; as a tree is smitten by a thunderbolt, or a city demolished by an earthquake. It is far more difficult to build up, to consolidate, and to confirm ; because it requires the consent and co-operation of thousands, and the increasing purpose of generations of reverent men. The growth of human Institutions is a long, laborious, slow, silent, and mostly an unconscious process ; and, because it is so, what the human race thus accomplishes calls for the reverence of posterity, and not its scorn ; while it demands an earnest effort to preserve, to sustain, and to transmit it unimpaired.

Now unto Him, etc.

IV.

Conservation and Change.

(CONTINUED).

In the Second Book of Samuel, chapter xx., verses 20, 21, it is written—"Far be it, far be it from me, that I should swallow up or destroy. The matter is not so."

In the sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, verse 18, it is written—"Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders."

It will suffice for those who are always telling us that good comes out of evil, to suggest that such disasters as are indicated in the last address only stir up the next generation to fresh creative activity. No doubt, in many instances, it is so. The sense of loss often leads to productiveness, just as "necessity is the mother of invention." The destruction of Greek art, for example, and the burning of the great library of the ancient world, may have helped forward the revival of Europe when it came; because, while there were fewer precedents to appeal to, there was a greater demand for originality and inventiveness. But what of the long period of stagnation that followed the episodes of destruction and violence? what of the evils that ensued to the generations that were impoverished meanwhile? These disasters to humanity, these wounds to the human race in general, are the missing links in the chain of progress, which are forgotten by the advocates of revolutionary change.

It is true that the race may ultimately gain from the destructive frenzy of a few; for such is the sweep of that all-pervading law of action and re-action that we cannot

THINGS NEW AND OLD

tell how much we are indebted, even to the rude iconoclasm of the past, for the constructive toil of subsequent generations. Such is the solidarity of the race in the direction indicated, so bound together are the successive generations, as well as all contemporary workers, that we can with difficulty estimate our debt to agencies and Institutions, wholly unlike those in which we have been nurtured, for the very impulses that are now inspiring us. But, by appealing to the results which follow any course of action in the next generation, it is possible to defend almost everything that has happened in history. Every great crime stirs up society, awakens indignation, and leads to much reactionary good. But what of the evil it does in itself, and by contagion or the force of example? The argument from results is a vain plea in defence of anything that occurs; because we are always liable to deception, both in tracing causes and following consequences; and we can never know that what emerges is not equally the result of other causes, co-operating with that which is most obvious, and on which the eye of the observer may be turned.

Besides, we have manifestly no right, from our detection of blemishes in an Institution which it requires no great acumen to perceive, to take part in its demolition. It is the easiest thing in the world to discover flaws, whether they be motes in your neighbour's eye, or beams in a sister Church, or tendencies that are unlovely and arrogant, or blind and headstrong, in the tone and temper of Society. But if to detect these things is easy, and to rail at them does no good, to seek to destroy the Institutions in which they exist, because we have been sharp-witted enough to see the evils that cling to them, is essentially fanatical. What structure could be put in the

CONSERVATION AND CHANGE

place of our existing ones, that would be free from defect? Sometimes, in the interest of a fancied movement of reconstruction, the work of demolition is advocated. The overthrow is meant to be a process preliminary to upbuilding. But, it is as impossible for us to devise a social structure that shall be free from blemish, as it is to construct a creed with the stamp of finality upon it. That which to our theoretic wisdom might seem superior, were its merits tested by practical existence, would soon be seen to be as faulty as its predecessor, many hidden evils being developed by experience.

In addition to this, it may be increasingly difficult to found new Institutions, as society advances. Individualism seems more and more dominant, as time goes on; and if the corporate life of the nation—as embodied, for example, in the Churches of the State—gives way before this individualistic movement, it is difficult to see what can take its place, that will be half so salutary or half so enduring. What hope is there that any new Organisation would be better than the old? that it would be worthier to live, or longer lived? Might not the destruction of the old hasten on the disintegration of the new? Our duty therefore seems to be, to let the institutions, in the midst of which we live, survive, so long as there is life in them; not only unassailed by us, but fostered and upheld. As already said, they cannot survive for ever; and they will all pass away soon enough. But our main business is to conserve and upbuild, in order that we may accomplish something positive; and what we thus conserve will—if it be genuine—take a silent and unconscious part in the demolition of that which ought not to live.

Then, should not mere modesty and diffidence—due to the fact that much error and illusion are inevitably mixed

THINGS NEW AND OLD

up with the convictions we entertain—lead to the same practical result? Let us see how this will operate. I suppose we are not wrong in saying that everyone should see clearly, and know accurately, the character of things around him—what they are and how they have come to be what they are—before he can know what is his duty concerning them. There should therefore be no toleration of opinions which cannot stand the day-light of evidence, and the siftings of experience. The freer our thought can be the better, if its fetters are only custom, conventionality, and tradition. It should be the aim of every one to penetrate from the seeming to the real, and to be freed from illusions of every kind. But then, as it is certain that we all carry about manifold illusions mixed up with the truth we may happen to have reached, and also that we shall retain some of them to the end of our lives, taking them for the truth, the knowledge of that fact should make us extremely cautious in carrying out our convictions, if their practical issues are in any sense iconoclastic. It is as impossible for us to be entirely free from prejudice, as it is to be wholly free from the germs of physical disease.

Add to this, that the deepest or most thorough knowledge we ever attain to—on practical as well as on theoretic subjects—is knowledge not of the whole, but only of a part of the questions with which we deal. These two facts taken together should induce caution, and never permit us to be hurried into condemning an Institution, if there are the signs of active life within it. In an age in which rapidity of change and transition are such marked features, an age in which it is “the unexpected that happens,” all neutrality of mind, irresolution, and indifference are to be condemned. But, on the other hand,

CONSERVATION AND CHANGE

intellectual indecision and tampering with conviction are not the only evils with which we are threatened ; nor are their opposites the main virtues in an era of swift transition. When everything is being shaken that can be shaken, it is surely as much the duty of sensible men to hold fast by what has stood the strain of time and the shocks of controversy, as it is to be ready to abandon that which is palpably demonstrated to be worthless.

The open avowal of opinion, its emphatic declaration, if intelligently held, is always welcome ; but, if its issues are in the main destructive, it should be advanced with reserve. It is true that we must speak the truth, and do the right " although the heavens should fall." But then if we speak the truth, and do the right, no such catastrophe will follow, either really or metaphorically ! It is true that we must change, and progress, if we are to continue to live, but we cannot move forward wisely, if we have no fixed relation both to the past and to the present.

Whatever our way of dealing with the great problems of human thought, our right relation to the great social and religious Organisations of the world is obvious. There are those who place the very existence of a State Church amongst the agencies " that weaken the vigour of a national conscience, and check the free play and access of intellectual light." Surely they fail to see the conserving and protective power of historic institutions. Surely a national Church ought to be a reflection of the national character, and an organic growth springing out of that character. It ought, therefore, to tolerate within it many diverse types of thought and of practice, and to rejoice in each, as a separate phase of that manifoldness, in the unity of which lies the strength of national character. National Churches have not always

THINGS NEW AND OLD

done so to an adequate extent ; but at least they have done so more adequately than other churches have done it. It is outside the State Churches—amid the rival jealousies of dissent—that aberrations both of dogma and of ritual are likely to be greatest ; where they have no check from the national conscience, organised in the Church of the State. When bodies of men who might have remained within the national enclosure, are either driven out (from some peculiarity of belief or practice) or voluntarily go forth, and separate themselves, forming a new sect or taking independent root, they, or their successors, are most likely to develop extremes of opinion and of practice.

Suppose our existing National Churches to be broken up, the result would be neither the abolition of extremes of opinion, nor the unification of religious practice ; but the intensification of sect-life, alienation, and jealousy. And why ? How may we with confidence predict such a result ? Because the causes which have led to the development of diverse types of thought and of practice, within the Church are permanent ones. They will survive, and create new types in the future ; and each going on in its own way, may give rise to extremes, —if not more extravagant certainly more unsympathetic, —when they are released from the restraints they now experience. They are now controlled, both by the conscious and the unconscious influence of the presence of their opposites. It is not the variety within the Church that is to be condemned ; for the more variety, the greater the life. It is the want of toleration, of mutual sympathy, forbearance, and appreciation.

But, lest it be thought that in condemning the spirit that assails Institutions, and in magnifying its opposite,

CONSERVATION AND CHANGE

there is any depreciation of the aims of our liberal teachers to find out what is true, and to proclaim it—though Institutions should fall and crumble around them—I repeat, Let criticism disclose to us more and more the origin of old beliefs, and explain the sources of illusion; let the laws of the universe and the causes of the rise and fall of systems of opinion be disclosed; let the habit of correctly weighing evidence, and correctly using words, be taught increasingly; let all error be tracked out and exposed remorselessly. These things never interfere with what is worthy of life, for it is thus that the leaven of the new ideas is instilled, to work silently in the body corporate, and to mould the thought of the world. But let no revolutionary hand be raised to destroy what has come down to us from the past, to remove the ancient landmarks of a nation's faith and piety; lest in rooting up the tares—which unquestionably exist—we root up the wheat along with them. Change of opinion may be both salutary and necessary. It may be a sign of life, and its extent an index and measure of life. But surely it is possible for our Institutions to live, while our opinions change; for our social Organisations to survive, while our earlier convictions are out-grown. Our Institutions are deeper than our opinions, just as the race is wider than the individual.

Can we suppose that any future age of enlightenment will be able to dispense with the past, or discard the results of its accumulated experience? Have our fathers lived in vain, thought in vain, or built up the great Structures of the past in vain, for their children's children? If the advance of knowledge, and the widening of experience, enable us to see that much in which they trusted is illusory, we cannot dispense with the new experience

THINGS NEW AND OLD

we inherit, from what the race collectively has outgrown. "The child is father of the man," and the youth of the world is creative of its age. As we have still to deal with the same problems with which our predecessors wrestled, we may, on many points, come back to the conclusions of the past, after having moved from them for a time. On many others, we may discover that the new opinion is but an old one transmuted, reset in a fresh form, and clothed in the vesture or fashion of the day. When we have outgrown the ideas of late years, do we never return to the earlier conclusions of our youth? or discover a hitherto unsuspected meaning in what was taught as the first lessons of infant piety?

Now, apply this subject, first, in our estimate of party, and party movements; and secondly, in the formation of personal habits of modesty, reverence, and humility.

If you would find out the animating spirit of any party in Church or State, mark its attitude toward the past. Is it reverential? Is it docile? Is it conciliatory? Does it strive to base its forward movements upon the wisdom and experience of the past? Is it moving on the path of reform, with its face turned courageously to the future, ready to advance, but with its hand still clinging to the past? Then, it is worthy of your esteem. On the contrary, is it noisy, arrogant, self-complaisant? blind to the wisdom and indifferent to the merits of the past; blustering in its assumptions, and confident of its superiority? Then, it has deprived itself of any title to your esteem, by whatever name it may be known, and on whatever side of the conventional party-line it may happen to be standing. If a party—whether in Church or State—is full of the new wine of revolutionary projects, it is self-condemned. If it is ambitious to progress, but to pro-

CONSERVATION AND CHANGE

gress on the lines of the past—at once wisely liberal, and wisely conservative—and in no sense neutral because it shuns “the falsehood of extremes,” then it is self-approved and self-attesting. It will be found that every Institution shares the fate of its leader; and, when its novelty is past, and its inevitable defects are seen, agitators arise who clamour for its removal. Others who see beyond the leader, to the Organisation which he leads, will seek to reform it from within, and to preserve its life by interior expansion and renovation.

Then as to individual character and habit. Have you got hold of a new truth? Then, hold it modestly, though firmly, and with decision. Do not noisily proclaim it from the house-top. Let it silently ally itself with the truths you learned yesterday, and with those which you may live to learn to-morrow; and, if they all grow up together, each will become more mellow and matured. When you learn any new truth, it is not intended that it should at once dethrone its predecessors. However true it is, it ought never to destroy the beliefs amongst which it comes, which have been there before it, and in the light of which you have hitherto lived. Above all, it should never be allowed to become a party watch-cry, or the badge of a narrow-minded activity.

Now one of the chief merits of the conservative spirit, which scruples to assail what has come down to us with the seal and attestation of the past, is that it tends to habits of reverence, humility, and a wise discernment of the less obvious aspects of human duty, both towards institutions and individuals. I do not know how we are to attain to that delicacy of soul, which the old religious writers called “a tender conscience,” but by habits of reverence, scrupulosity, and veneration for all that reaches

THINGS NEW AND OLD

us from the past, as well as for the fresh revelations of the day. True reverence for the past, for the Voice of the Eternal, speaking to us in past Institutions, events, "dispensations," will lead to a deeper reverence for the living Oracles of the present hour. Reverence for the past, i.e., for all that has hitherto revealed the Divine character and ways, will develop in us the penetration of mind and alertness of soul that are quick to respond to the everlasting Voice, even in its faintest modern echo. Now unto Him, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things, be glory, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end!

V.

The Continuity and Development of Religion.

In the 102nd Psalm, verses 26, 27, it is written—"They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shall thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

IT is singular how often we hear that the age in which we live is one of transition, and that we are passing through a crisis in religious belief. Doubtless "the old order" has changed, "yielding place to new;" and it is altering, perhaps, more rapidly than at any former period. No opinion now passes unchallenged, because of its antiquity; no tradition is accepted, on the ground of authority; and, under the searching light of criticism, every belief is forced to show its credentials. There is, in consequence, a widespread feeling of unsettlement, as if the mental atmosphere were charged with electricity; and many are afraid that the result may prove disastrous to Religion. It is natural that when the fire is testing everything, we should endeavour to find out what is, and what is not, combustible; and only the ignorant, or the callous, will neglect to ask whether any of their convictions are of "the asbestos type."

But is this feature of the day a novel one? Is it original, or exclusively modern? It may be a mere illusion of our restlessness, that the characteristics of our age are in any sense exceptional; as if former times

THINGS NEW AND OLD

were not also transitional, or as if what we call the "crises" of history were not incessant, sempiternal, ubiquitous, and changing everlastingly. Every one knows that many things are real, which are not realised by us when they occur; and to one who is even moderately acquainted with the history of opinion it may excite a feeling of surprise to be told that the men of to-day are exceptionally situated, or that in all the turmoil through which we are passing anything very extraordinary has happened. The opinions which men form, and express, as to the tendencies of their own time are indeed curiously inconsistent and conflicting. Each one's estimate, being a reflection more or less of his own temperament, is to that extent a biassed judgment. Some will tell you, for example, that the times are pre-eminently scientific; and that, while the sleep of tradition is past, all the knowledge and faith of the future must be critically readjusted from its base. Others assure us that we live in very degenerate days, in an age unearnest and unideal, given over for the most part to the worship of comfort and material prosperity. Thus, while many depreciate the present—contrasting it with the imaginary glories of the past—others exaggerate its significance, and magnify its crisis. It may be, however, that a century hence a halo will surround this age of ours, similar to that which now lights up the centuries that are gone; while the supposed crisis we are passing through will seem a singularly small affair, in the light of its sequel.

Be this as it may, it is altogether misleading to suppose that Religion is endangered in the nineteenth century any more than it was in the first. Religion *lives* now, just as it has always lived. Freed from the accessories, which have been so often mistaken for its essence, it is

CONTINUITY & DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

as true now as ever it was. If there be any analogy between the individual and the race, the religion of the world has now reached comparative maturity, and is necessarily stronger than it was in infancy, or during the period of its youth. Its historic origin may be undiscoverable in the past, but we find no period in which it has been absent; and during every century that has elapsed, it has struck its root deeper in the soil of human nature, while it has proved itself to be indigenous to every land. Its history is the history of progressive development, and of continuously unfolding life. Though now assailed in many ways—as it has always been—its most formidable foe is by no means a modern assailant. It is neither an antagonistic system, nor an opposing hierarchy. It is not even the tradition that has overlaid it, nor the “enemy in the household” that has so often destroyed its unity in the strife of party spirit, or the clash of rival doctrines. It is a far subtler antagonist—one that is neither ancient nor modern, but a tendency permanently present behind the world’s religion—associated with all its forms, and working underneath its symbols.

This, which I call its most formidable foe, is now spoken of as Agnosticism. From it, Religion has more to fear than from any form of explicit Atheism; because it refrains from direct attack—affirming that all the doctrines of Religion belong to the sphere of the unknowable. Our modern agnosticism, however, contains nothing that is new, except the name; and the one great Dogma which it controverts contains nothing that is superannuated. A panic-stricken age is apt to forget that Criticism has always existed side by side with the Religion which it has endeavoured to test, and which it

THINGS NEW AND OLD

has perhaps protected as much as it has assailed. It is constantly forgotten that our predecessors felt the limits of the knowable, quite as truly as we do ; and that the same intellectual puzzles, the same moral difficulties with which we are familiar, pressed upon the general mind of the race two thousand or ten thousand years ago, without extinguishing its reverence, or destroying by one iota the worship of the Divine and the Invisible. Neither our faith, nor our doubt, are things of yesterday. In every age, Religion has found a home in human consciousness ; and, in the face of all denial, it has won for itself a sanctuary in human life. In each age also, be it noted that criticism has demolished some of the frameworks built around Religion, which their authors fancied were part of its essence. But the breaking up of these frameworks has never injured the soul or spirit of devotion. On the contrary, it has set it free, giving it opportunity for new departures, to prove its immortality by development in fresh directions. Religious intuition never dies. Its activity is spontaneous and unceasing ; while the labours of the understanding—working along with the spiritual instincts—invariably build up some fresh scaffoldings of dogma, which posterity destroys.

Two things, however, seem to excite periodic apprehension, and to suggest from time to time the instability of Religion. The one is the possibility of explaining its origin by tracing its development, and detecting its presence even in the most rudimentary ideas and practices of the world. The other is the obscurity and ultimate mystery of the central dogma, on which Religion rests. We shall look at these two things in succession.

As to the first, I have said that modern criticism does not assail religious belief. It only endeavours to explain

CONTINUITY & DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

it, by tracing its ancestry, and showing us the root whence it has sprung; by pointing out "the rock out of which it has been hewn," and "the pit whence it has been digged." But this explanation of origin is supposed to discredit the originality of what has thus been evolved; reducing it from a position of supremacy to that of one amongst a host of competitors, which have wrestled together for ages, and which still struggle for the homage of mankind. The truth or the falsehood of any particular opinion, however, is not dependent on the way in which it has come to light, or the stages of development through which it has passed, or on the precise point which at length it may have reached. It may have attained its present form by a process of very gradual growth, or by a rapid and apparently sudden disclosure. In both cases it may have equal evidence in its favour; and a doctrine may be proved to be true, either by an immediate demonstration of the reason, or by the continuous assent of the ages. It may have the evidence of a first principle, or it may be guaranteed by experience, i.e., by the constancy with which the instincts of mankind return to it, and the tenacity with which they cling to it.

It does not therefore follow that, if we can explain the origin of a particular belief, by tracing its parentage and finding that it has sprung from inferior elements, the validity of the belief itself is in the slightest degree imperilled. Nay, it is indisputable that if the human mind has grown at all, its religious convictions—like everything else belonging to it—must have changed. Our remote ancestors could not possibly have had the same religion as ourselves, any more than they could have had the same physiognomy, the same social customs, or the same language. Thus, the intuitions of subsequent ages must

THINGS NEW AND OLD

necessarily have become keener and clearer—at once more rational and more spiritual—than the instincts of primeval days; the clearness, the intelligence, and the spirituality being due to a vast number of co-operating causes. And, if the opinions and the practices of the race thus change, the change is due to no accident or caprice, but to the orderly processes of natural law. It cannot be otherwise; because, since no human belief springs up miraculously, none can be retained in the form in which it arises for any length of time. Thus, the “increasing purpose” of the ages must inevitably bring to the front fresh modifications of belief. If our theologies have all grown out of something very different, why should we fear their continued growth?

And why should any rational theist dread the future expansion of theistic belief? If it has grown, it must continue to grow; and many of its existing phases must disappear. The controversies of our time are the phases of its evolution. But is it now so very perfect, that we would wish it to remain stationary at its present point of development? that its present phases should be permanent? May we not rather rejoice that “these all shall wax old as a garment,” and that “as a vesture they shall be changed;” while the Object—of which they are the interpretation, or which they try to represent—endures, and of its immortality there shall be no end? It may even be affirmed that one of the best features in every human belief is its elasticity, that one sign of its vitality is its amenability to change. Were it irrevocably fixed it would have some secret affinity with death and the grave. Paradoxical therefore as it may seem, if religion be amongst the things that cannot be shaken, it must change. Its forms must die that its spirit may live; and

CONTINUITY & DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

the condition of the permanence of the latter is the perpetual vicissitude of the former. Curious it is, that some of its most ardent advocates cannot recognise it under a new dress, that even its disciples misconstrue it when it changes its raiment. They think it a foe if it is differently apparelled. But how often, in human controversy, the combatants are merely speaking different dialects, while they mean the same thing. How often they are essentially at one, if only they knew it!

But granting that the opinion of the world is an organic whole, that all human conviction—with its present variety and complexity—has grown out of very lowly roots, and that our most sacred beliefs have emerged from others that are different, a further and a far more important question lies behind this admission. It is this: How are we to interpret the whole series from beginning to end? It is not enough to say that there has been progress; what meaning are we to attach to the term progress? Are we to think of it as simple succession and accumulation, the mere addition of new links to a chain of development? We know that men have "risen on stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things," and also that the "individual withers, while the race is more and more;" but do the individuals and their beliefs only resemble beads which have been strung on a thread of endlessly developing succession?

What has the race been doing during all this onward process of development? Has it at every stage been the victim of continuous illusion? Or, has it all the while been in closest contact with Reality, a reality which it partially understands, and interprets to good purpose? In other words, is the history of religious ideas merely the record of attempts made by men to project their own

THINGS NEW AND OLD

image outwards, to throw their thought around an impalpable object, which it has never yet been able to grasp? or, is it the story of successive efforts, more and more successful, to explain a Reality which transcends it, but to which it stands in a definite and ascertainable relation? Do the gropings of experience in the matters of Religion record a long and weary search, with no discovery rewarding it? or are they the efforts of human apprehension to realise the divine, to get at the "last clear elements of things," with disclosure at every stage, and a steady approach to the goal which is continually sought, and approximately reached?

I think it is past controversy that if the religious education of the human race has been a purely subjective process, if it has been merely an upward tendency of aspiration, it is now no nearer its goal than ever it was. If we can only approach the Infinite by the journeyings of finite thought, or through sighs and cries of aspiration, the journey that way is endless, and the end is nowhere visible. But may we not find the object everywhere? may not the discovery have been as continuous as the search? and the two be simultaneous now? I think we may affirm that the human race has lived in the light of a never-ceasing apocalypse, growing clearer through the ages, but never absent from the world since the first age began.

And may we not also affirm as equally indisputable that it cannot now get quit of its belief in the Divine? that this conviction is a permanent element in its consciousness, I mean in the organic consciousness of the world? It has always been easy to controvert the statement that theism is, in one form or another, native to the human mind, that we cannot divest ourselves of it. Facts

CONTINUITY & DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

are quoted against us. An array of statistics is produced to show many blank spaces in the religious annals of the race, long periods in which the belief has been absent, and entire races in which it is now inoperative. But, if our former contention has any force, that the belief itself has passed through a vast number of phases, its absence may be merely apparent. If the laws of hereditary descent apply to religion as well as to language, to theological belief as well as to national character and temperament, the continuity may be real while the genealogy is hidden. The assertion that theistic belief is innate is often travestied into the statement that the human mind cannot rid itself of some special theological doctrine, or theory of the divine nature. But the assertion is a very different and a much deeper one. It is that the intuition, which gives rise to these doctrines, remains; and that when our superstructures of theory are overthrown, a surviving instinct builds them up again, or replaces them by others that are better.

We must vindicate this assertion by explaining it a little further. The word Religion has undergone many remarkable changes, alternately widening and contracting in popular use and wont; now involving less, and again including more, as the religious instincts themselves have narrowed or enlarged. Thus, the definitions of religion have been very various; and they may all contain some element of truth, while none are exhaustive. Probably we expect too much from definitions. It may be impossible to express the essence of religion either in a proposition, or through a symbol or a ceremony. It may be too ethereal for analysis, too delicate for our intellectual balances; but if it escapes our frames

THINGS NEW AND OLD

of theory, and defies all logical manipulation, that will be no proof of its inferiority, but rather a sign of its divineness.

Recall then some of the definitions of Religion offered for our acceptance. Suppose we say, with one, that it takes its rise in the sense of Dependence; or, with another, that it springs out of the consciousness of inward Freedom; with a third, that it is the apprehension of Power beyond the individual, suggested by the phenomena which control, or the forces which subdue him; with a fourth, that it is the apprehension of the Infinite, encircling the finite, yet revealed within it; or, with a fifth, that it is Morality sublimated, touched with emotion; with another, that it is that rational Insight which discerns the underlying essence and the fundamental unity of things, bringing man into harmony with himself and with the universe; with a seventh, that it is the pursuit of the Ideal, "the strong and earnest direction of the emotions towards an ideal object recognised as of the highest excellence, and rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire;" or, with yet another, that it is homage offered at the shrine of humanity, but directed to that other self, higher and wider than our individual selves, that divine Humanity, that human Divinity, in which we live and move and have our being. All these attempts to define its essence, and to express it in a theory, may be helpful to us more or less. They may be useful and fruitful in many ways. Religious thought and life have together assumed so many forms, that we cannot wonder at the variety of the definitions given. We return to this subject at a future time.

Now unto Him, etc.

VI.

The Continuity and Development of Religion.

(CONTINUED).

In the 102nd Psalm, verses 26, 29, it is written—"They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end."

REFERRING to the problem already discussed, we may ask, Is it possible to find anything common, in all the Religions of the world, which is a specific element in each of them, or a feature underlying them all? I think it is; although, in every instance, it may present a twofold aspect. As on the one hand, a faculty or tendency of the human soul, and on the other the recognition of an object, it has always two sides, an inner and an outer. Call the former a faculty, or a capacity, or a tendency, it matters not. It is, in any case, a real element in human consciousness, a permanent power of apprehension, half intellectual and half emotive. But it is not enough merely to discover and to vindicate its existence as an inward tendency of the human soul. Every such tendency has an objective side that is quite as significant as the subjective. If it is a power of apprehension we must ascertain what it apprehends. In all cases this is an Object, external to the individual, definitely related to him; and, although very variously construed, it is recognised—both in the elementary and in the more advanced stages of religion—as having elements of kindredness with our own nature.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

Even on its subjective side, Religion is not the mere opening of the flood-gates of emotion towards the unknown and the unknowable. It is not emotion awakened by the sense of mystery. It is also the intellectual recognition and the moral discernment of a real Object. No theory of Religion, which omits this fact, is complete or satisfactory. It meets us at every stage in the path of development. The records of religious history invariably disclose some effort of the human mind to penetrate further into the mystery of things, both by thought and by feeling; to rise higher in the apprehension of the Infinite, to descend deeper towards the eternal ground of things; in other words, not only to feel the overshadowing mystery, but also to perceive the light that is within it. But, always associated with the effort to apprehend this object, there is a corresponding disclosure of the object itself. Divine revelation is accomplished simply by a removal of the things which had previously obscured the object it reveals. It does not bring the latter any nearer to us. It merely draws aside the veil, which had prevented the human eye from seeing it; enabling us to perceive what had been always present, but not always recognised. Thus, in all Religion, there is first a subjective state of human thought and feeling; next, the recognition of an external object; and lastly, the discernment of that object in the act of revealing itself.

Try now to go back, imaginatively and sympathetically, to the rudest primitive age; think, for example, of our forefathers, in the grey morning of the world's religion, engaged at their tree and serpent worship. They heard the wind moaning mysteriously in the forest, while they saw the tree arise mysteriously from the ground.

CONTINUITY & DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

They observed its life come forth in the summer, and retire in winter. They saw the serpent crawling mysteriously on the ground, by a power they could not understand; and in both cases were they awed in the presence of the mystery. What was exceptional and unintelligible excited wonder, and led to acts of homage. And, although the race has long outgrown the habit, the savage who first called upon his fellows to worship the tree,—as a symbol of the mystery of growth,—was really a prophet of religious ideas; quite as truly as, though much less articulately than, the founders of maturer faiths. If you consider the blank animal life out of which the former arose, in the long process of development, you will see how great was the advance which such a primitive worshipper made.

The sense of mystery in individual objects, such as the tree or serpent, yielded by degrees to the wider and grander feeling of a mystery in Nature, as a whole: and the highest religion ends, not in an exhaustive explanation of things, but in a partial uplifting of the veil which only serves to disclose the wider horizon of the unknown. Pass over intermediate phases, and come down to its later developments. Our conviction of the Divine Fatherhood, for example, is immeasurably higher than that of the primitive savage; because we find a far loftier idea lodged within that symbol, than any to which the savage mind attained. But our symbol does not exhaust the thing it symbolises. No analogy, figure, or metaphor casts more than a dubious light on the object which it represents.

A symbol is in fact merely a ladder, by which we ascend from the ground of the material; but which we must, in every instance, cast aside when we pass to the

THINGS NEW AND OLD

sphere of the ideal and the spiritual. Thus, while there has been a gradual uprise of human apprehension in matters of religion, the mysteriousness of the Object apprehended has always made our explanations partial, and our definitions incomplete. Our present modes of thought regarding it are not ultimate. They will not suffice for our descendants, who may leave many of our symbols behind them, as we have abandoned those of a primitive and pre-historic past. But Religion itself will not be left behind. Religion itself is deathless, because it is the outcome of a permanent tendency, and the satisfaction of an ineradicable want of human nature. It is indestructible, because it is the embodiment of a spiritual instinct, which survives in the general heart of the race ; and which—if it ever seems to die—is immediately raised again from the dead, and lives on through a thousand changes.

If humanity stands in living relation to a Revealer, who is omnipresent and always communicative, the Christian revelation,—in the light of which we are now living,—is but the continuation and development of that which primitive worshippers enjoyed, in humbler manner and in lower form. Neither they nor we can “by searching find out God,” or understand the Eternal as He is. We all have “seen, through a glass darkly,” the glory of the Infinite ; but, between our purely animal ancestors, and the savage who was first subdued by the glory of the sky and the mystery of life, there was an interval as great as that which separates the latter from ourselves. In the whole process there has been revelation, the unveiling of secret things to hearts that were

CONTINUITY & DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

open and recipient. In all, there has been inspiration, at sundry times and in diverse manners, continuous, incessant, universal.

All the stages of religious history have been graduated, all are continuous; and if to the eye of omniscience there is as much meaning in the seed as in the flower, there was a spiritual significance in the earliest gropings of the world's remotest childhood, as well as in those of the maturest worshippers of Christendom. Do we not see as much in the lisps of our children, and watch their infantile apprehensions with as keen an interest, as we take in the judgments of full-grown men? And can we suppose that the common Father of us all was less interested in the guesses of our remote barbaric ancestors than He is in ours? May we not rather say historically, that "out of the mouth of the babes and sucklings" of the world's religion He has "perfected praise?"

Besides, if our belief in the continuity of Religion were more vivid, it would allay much of the panic and distraction that prevail. To a great extent this is due to our making Religion too complex and artificial. If its essential simplicity were realised, its perpetuity would be apparent. We need to get quit of the illusion of "seeking the living amongst the dead," of mistaking words for things. We need to get to the solid ground of reality, and then to lift our eyes to the eternal background that enfolds it, and the Supernatural will be discerned by us, as within the natural everywhere; not as an occasional force, sent down irregularly into the rents or fissures of Nature, but as the inmost life of whatsoever is, or was, or yet shall be.

If some of its ancient strongholds Religion may be compelled to surrender, before the advance of criticism,

THINGS NEW AND OLD

this it will never give up ; but, standing upon it, it will compel the homage of the future. We may have to surrender the notion of creation out of nothing, the notion of creatures leaping on the stage of being, full formed, unevolved. We may have to abandon the idea of Divine energy slumbering for an infinity of ages, then becoming suddenly and stupendously active, again taking rest and again awakening by fits and starts to action. We may feel it derogatory to the notion of Deity to imagine that, as one asleep, He started up after an eternity of silence to work and sleep again. We may have to renounce the notion of a Worker overcoming difficulties, devising and designing things after a human pattern, as unworthy of the Infinite and the Omniscient. All our symbolic thoughts, and word-pictures, will more and more be seen to be inadequate, because, the moment the mind attempts to think of them as adequate, they vanish from its grasp. But no illusion of tradition will ever disenchant the mind of the belief that the Infinite is for ever revealing himself, that " God's great completeness flows around our incompleteness, round our restlessness his rest ; " that God is within us as well as without, the soul of our souls, the life of our lives, the substantial Self that underlies the surface evanescent self.

And it is one glory of the Christian religion that it has developed a new conviction of the nearness of God to man ; their kindredness, their reciprocity, their relations of intimacy and fellowship. It has given rise to emotions more tender, intense, and reverential than were ever felt before, by its twin doctrines of the knowableness and the unknowableness of God ; or, as I have already said, by its recognition of abiding mystery, and of the light that is within the mystery. God recognised as the

CONTINUITY & DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

interior essence of all things, the substance of all reality, revealing himself through all phenomena which are "the garment we see him by." If the finite for ever reveals the Infinite, the universe may from everlasting have lived and moved and had its being in God; and our humanity, —poor as we all feel it to be,—is not cut off from the Universal Life by reason of our individuality, and separateness from other things. Personality is not a fence dividing us from that Life, but only a fence which separates us from one another. Nay, at the core of our being we do not feel separated from one another, simply because we are one in relation to that Life. It is only on the surface that we are apart: in the deepest depths we are one.

So far, we have considered the first of the two causes, which excite periodic apprehension; and seem, but only seem, to threaten the stability of Religion.

The second, which remains, may be dealt with more briefly. It is the obscurity and ultimate mystery on which the one great dogma of Religion rests. That it should be difficult to prove the most radical truth pertaining to Religion is perplexing enough. If the Divine Existence be the supreme reality within the universe, how, it is asked, should the human mind ever miss its evidence, or fail to realise it? Why is the stupendous fact not flashed in upon the soul on every side, with indubitable force, so as to produce an overmastering conviction? Should not the greatest truth be the most steadily luminous and self-attesting? equal in its obviousness, at least to the phenomena of Nature, or the laws of mathematics? Why, in other words, it may be asked, should clouds and darkness surround a Being that is, in its inmost essence, light?

THINGS NEW AND OLD

In answer, this last peculiarity may be sometimes due to a defect in the eye of the beholder. God may be light, and in Him may be "no darkness at all," but the light may shine in the darkness of our natures, while "the darkness comprehends it not." An explanation may be found in the characteristics of our own optic nerve,—just as many of us are morally colour-blind. Again, the atmosphere which surrounds us may be so dull and cloudy that the light cannot penetrate it. Both our moral and our social state at times project a shadow far beyond themselves. But there may be other reasons additional to these, springing out of the very nature of the case, and the course of education we are passing through. If we lived in the cloudless light, the conditions of moral discipline would be very different from what they now are. If all religious truths were as obvious as those of science, there would be no room for spiritual trust; and our moral life would become a process of mechanical development. If the "doubt, hesitation, and pain," to which our best achievements are due, disappeared, the achievements themselves might soon cease to be.

Nay, if we lived in the light alone and always, we might see the Divine object, without perceiving it: we might hear its voice, without recognising it. But with light and darkness intermingled and successive, with glimpses of the Object seen through the openings of the cloud which close again and conceal it, we are in a region of experience, in which the discipline of trust is rendered possible, and the ventures of faith are realised. Thus, what we sometimes think an obstacle to faith may be an aid to our vision of Reality. And if it be so, all the variety in our interpretations of that Reality—the different conclusions of our different theologies—may be

CONTINUITY & DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION

merely due to the particular angle at which the light reaches the eye of the beholder, to the point at which the cloud has broken, and the way in which it has disclosed the Object behind it.

With this conceded, we may be in a position to see how the theistic solution helps us, in the presence of the mystery which remains, after all our solutions have been given. That the theistic explanation of the world is bordered round about with difficulty is admitted by every one, who has thought to any purpose on the question. But then, all our knowledge—even the most luminous portion of it—recedes, at the last, into the unknowable ; and no conceivable Revelation, in this or any other condition of existence, reaching us from any imaginable quarter, could enable us to “understand all mysteries and all knowledge.” Under its most ample disclosures, we should but stand as now, on a little sunlit promontory, with the immeasurable ocean before us, and the horizon of our knowledge would still be girdled by a line of mystery.

But then, the theistic doctrine does not leave us baffled before the enigmas which it recognises. We are neither intellectually prostrate, nor morally helpless before them ; because it supplies us with a key, which partially unlocks the mystery. It gives us at least a definite, coherent, and rational explanation of things ; while it leaves a score of puzzles unexplained. If it lightens “the burden of the mystery”—which still remains to elevate the worship it evokes,—that surely is much. If it keeps our puzzles in the background of intellectual experience, and does not suffer them to obtrude upon the forefront of our moral life, that surely is more. If it turns the unceasing sense

THINGS NEW AND OLD

of mystery into a solemn discipline in reverence, that assuredly is most of all, to us who see everything "through a glass darkly." If the "darkness which may be felt" moderates our confidence, and checks dogmatic arrogance, the light that is associated with it elicits our enthusiasm, and inspires us with new hope. It forbids despondency. It rouses us from listlessness to earnest life, and trustful endeavour. We have at least some light to guide us; and, while we wish we had more of it, we are grateful for what we have. Thus, walking in the light, to the upright it ariseth, "shining more and more unto the perfect day."

Now unto Him, etc.

VII.

The Old and the New.

In the Book of Leviticus, chapter xxvi., verse 10, it is written—
“Ye shall bring forth the old, because of the new.”

IF you look into the context of this passage, you will see that the sentence quoted was part of the advice given by Moses to the people of Israel, during their desert wanderings; advice as to how they should act in the land they expected soon to occupy and colonize. He anticipated a prosperous future for the agricultural race; and in keeping with the Hebrew national idea that a righteous life would bring an attendant physical blessing, they were told that if they were faithful to the voice of conscience, and kept the law of the Eternal, their land would yield its increase, that political peace and national prosperity would be theirs; and that, in consequence, they need not look far into the future—laying up extra provision in prolific years—but might make free use of all their old stores, because fresh supplies were certain to succeed. The all-bountiful earth would yield her increase, and God would crown the year with his Goodness.

We need not trace the original application of the words any further; because the use we are to make of them is to extract a principle, which is neither ancient nor modern, but universal. That principle is, that we ought at all times to bring forth what is old in our experience, and get beyond it, before it becomes too old for profitable

THINGS NEW AND OLD

use ; because fresh experience is at hand, and better things await us, in the results that will arise, when what is old has been so used as entirely to disappear.

You may question the expediency of applying this maxim to our secular affairs. Whatever may have been its relevance to Israel, as applied to the material side of life ; with us, it altogether breaks down, in reference to our physical needs. We ought *not* invariably to use up what is old, trusting that new supplies will be ours, and "taking no thought for the morrow." But it often happens that a principle which is inapplicable in the outer sphere of action is most relevant in the inner one of experience. For example, in reference to the knowledge we amass, to the growth of character, to the changes which occur in our opinions, feelings, aspirations, and desires—to all that educates us in that mixed inward region—it is always expedient that we should bring forth the old, and use it up, "because of the new" that is awaiting us. What we have learned should be assimilated, not simply stored away ; and, being assimilated, it will disappear in the growth to which it gives rise. It will be transformed in the new experience which issues from it ; and conserved in the only sense in which it is worthy of survival. Thus only can it be said with truth that "in dying, behold ! it lives."

The story of the manna seen each morning around the tents of the wandering Israelites, but which could not be gathered up and stored away, whatever its origin—a question with which we need not perplex ourselves—had this significance. Its moral was that the attitude of the nation should be one of constant dependence upon the Infinite Divine Provider, and of fresh reciprocity from Him ; anxious-mindedness giving place to trust, and no

THE OLD AND THE NEW

shadow of fear for the future passing across the horizon of the soul of a single individual who does what is right. And are not we taught the same lesson, as the years advance, and we journey forward in the pilgrimage of life?

"Ye shall bring forth the old" (and use up the old) "because of the new."

To what does this advice from ancient times amount? We have been pursuing, let us suppose, some special lines of thought, and reached a certain number of conclusions; which we hold, however, not as final solutions of the problems that have occupied us, but as resting-places, where we pause to contemplate and look round. They yield us points of view, where by thoughtful contemplation we may prepare for the next journey we take. Thus they are stations reached, and passed by us, rather than *termini*. In looking back a very short way, we all find that our opinions have undergone change as to many things. We have been carried forward on the wave of a general movement not of our creating, and certainly in no sense amenable to our control. We may have advanced by the personal efforts of our own minds; or we may have been borne on by a "stream of tendency" which is ever sweeping around us. But whether more actively or more passively, it is certain that we have all changed in our opinions and feelings, in the range of our sympathies and ideals. In reference to each of these we have lived through experiences, which are now things of the past. We are inevitably moving away from them.

And it is an all-important part of education that we should learn so to live through experience as to get healthily beyond it. There is nothing worse for us than that our characters should fix themselves in formal

THINGS NEW AND OLD

grooves of thought, or mechanical ruts of feeling ; unless it be getting into the habit of incessant and ill-considered change. So long as an opinion or an emotion lasts, we should get the full benefit of them. But they cannot last for ever, and they all begin to change from the very moment of their birth.

In this there is a close parallel between the material and the spiritual realm. The truths we apprehend should be as the food we assimilate ; the emotions we cherish as the water by which we are refreshed. That is to say they should be the elements which go to the nourishment of the mind and heart, but which are themselves transformed as soon as they are received by us. They should be consumed, in the formation of spiritual tissue ; turned into brain-power and spiritual force. It may not be too much to say that the destiny of all the opinions we form, and the feelings we cherish, is that they should thus disappear, in the formation of character. They should die that they may be re-born perpetually. They will undergo a continual resurrection from the dead ; but they should come back to us, not as they were before. They will return with their form changed, although their essence may be unaltered.

And so, in reference to this perpetual resurrection, we need never raise the question (to quote an apostolic phrase) "with what body shall they come" ? that is to say in what form shall our old opinions, and our former emotions, return to us ? Or, if we do so, we may reply to the question—(as St. Paul did)—"that which is sown is not quickened except it die, and God giveth it a body as it pleaseth Him."

But while we must all experience this incessant change, in our intellectual and religious position, there is the

THE OLD AND THE NEW

widest possible difference in the way in which men and women encounter it, and act under it. You meet with those who are alternately letting one opinion go, and taking another up, but who are all the while quite uninfluenced by any of them; and so, it matters very little whether the opinions reached are true or false, if the character of those who hold them is not enriched by the process. You meet with others, who, during the whole course of the change which they cannot arrest, are searching for a fixed and permanent view of things; who abandon the old, only when it is found to be full of flaws; and take up the new, only because they think they have at length reached in it the indubitably certain.

Thus, they first unduly idolize their opinions, and then unduly despise them. They first think too much of the belief, which they come afterwards to abandon; and then, in casting it aside, they think too little of it. And so there is a painful restlessness, and doubt in their minds as to whether truth has been reached or not; while there is also a feeling of dissatisfaction, in looking back upon opinions once revered, but which—by the slow progress of events—have become spell-broken.

How different the attitude of one who recognises with St. Paul that here "we see through a glass darkly," and who therefore looks on all opinion as only an approximation to the infinite reality of things; each belief to be revered, and held firmly while it lasts, but all of them destined to succumb to the universal law which superannuates everything, while it is meant to be assimilated within the character that holds it; there being a time for all of them to be born, a time for each to die, and a time for every one to rise again from the dead.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

You will see at a glance, the difference between the position of one who goes through life, striving to gather opinion after opinion, and to store them all away as in a cabinet of curiosities—to be occasionally looked upon as sacred treasures, but never handled, and seen only through the glass which guards them from familiar touch—and the position of one who reverently forms an opinion, and assimilates it, knowing it to be but temporary; who lets it sink into the substance of his mind, and undergo transformation there, while it blends with his old convictions; and who also “waits in hope,” and is on the constant outlook for new and higher views, for deeper beliefs, for wider, richer, grander truths to be gathered in the future. “For now we see through a glass darkly, but then we shall see face to face: now we know in part, but then we shall know even as also we are known.”

Now to Him, etc.

VIII.

The Old and the New.

(CONTINUED).

In the Book of Leviticus, chapter xxvi., verse 10, it is written—
“Ye shall bring forth the old, because of the new.”

To apply the principle of this sentence in a way that may be helpful to some of us at the point where we happen to stand in the journey of life, we may call to mind the ninetieth Psalm of the Hebrew Scriptures. It is one of the oldest fragments of Jewish Literature; and in it, we find a contrast between two views of human life and destiny, drawn out in very memorable and decisive lines. Looked at from the outside, this life of ours is utterly insignificant and trivial. We are as a drop in the ocean of existence, a single pulse of the great heart of the universe, a single movement of the eternal eddying force. We are “a moment seen,” then gone: carried away as with a flood, and lost to view. Thus contemplated, the story of successive generations is sad enough. “We spend our years as a tale that is told.”

But let our nature be surveyed from within. Then, our life, which seemed so insignificant before, appears mysteriously great, greater than the material world that surrounds, and hems it in; and this, not only because we can take cognizance of Nature, understanding it in part, but because human nature is greater than the material world, being allied at its root to the Divine. It can therefore be assimilated to the likeness of the Divine. In other words, our destiny is not simply

THINGS NEW AND OLD

to appear for a brief space in this world—playing our several parts in secular struggle and finite endeavour, and then ceasing to be—but during these mundane years to live a life, and build up a character, which has relations with the Infinite, a life and a character that are consolidated from within.

Therefore it is that we not only recognise with the writer of this psalm “We are carried away as with a flood,” but we also join with him in saying “Establish Thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands establish Thou it.”

There is a tendency, of which perhaps we are all conscious less or more, to undervalue human life, if we dwell over long on its insignificance, when looked at from without; and its transitoriness as a part of the physical system of things. It is a tendency which the thought we have been dealing with may dissipate, or check. This is our first use or application of it. Realise again our insignificance as a part of “the System of Nature.” Thus regarded, man is a mere link in the chain of physical order. What are we? What are we all? the toiling millions of our race, in comparison with the vastness of the material Universe? Human life is a poor and insignificant affair, and we are trivial workers, who will all very soon be utterly forgotten.

And I daresay it is oftener felt, than said, by earnest men and women, “What is the value of our present labour under the sun? Is it not mere vanity and vexation of spirit? What boots it how we pass through experience which will soon be forgotten, or discharge duties which will fade as a dream dies at the opening day? What matters it how we bear up under trial, or fight the battle of life;

THE OLD AND THE NEW

when the story of our individual existence will soon be a thing of the past—dead and buried—and not even recoverable, as the fossils of a past state of physical existence are?" Now, that is a much more serious temptation to earnest men and women than any form of doubt as to truths once believed and accepted, for it is moral uncertainty. It is doubt as to the value of present discipline, and future destiny.

If, therefore, we find ourselves asking, or imagining, what is the value of toiling in obscure spheres, doing work that is regarded by few, and seems to lead to little profit, we may apply the principle which lies within the old Hebrew text, "Bring forth the old, because of the new." Live out, and live through, each experience—however trivial it may seem—believing it to be charged with immense latent significance, because of the new experience that will succeed it, and to which it will give rise. The realisation of this maxim, as a rule of life, may check the life-weariness which so often oppresses patient workers; and which has tempted some to abandon their posts, because of the poverty of life's results. Probably the noblest in the world know most of this; the temptation to disparage work not because it is hard and difficult—that might rather be an attraction—but because it seems so unproductive, its results so scanty, and the labour spent upon it disproportionate to the end achieved.

And then, when we look back on any single bit of our work, and find how poor it seems the longer it is looked at, how trivial all achievements are, when seen in retrospect—how the things we set our hearts on doing become unsatisfactory the moment they are accomplished—in all these experiences this Hebrew thought may be helpful. If what we have lived through is not valuable in itself,

THINGS NEW AND OLD

it may be of use, because of that to which it will give rise, when we are unconscious of it. We live in the present, because of that to which it will contribute; and we hope for that, which is not now within the range of our vision.

We know that when most elated by the consciousness of strength, by happy buoyancy and energy, we are often accomplishing the least; and that when in depression, or low spirits, while the wheels of our being revolve slowly or with pain, sometimes on looking back we find that our progress has been real. In short, our joyous moods are not always creative ones. They belong to the summer and autumn, rather than to the spring-time of our existence. But the real growth has gone before. Therefore, the wise can interpret what seems least satisfactory—days of prostration and life-weariness—as equal in value to their hours of elasticity, or of bright unfettered power.

Secondly, there is a morbid feeling of regret at growing old, which a wise use of this same principle will check. It is well known how some persons shrink back from the thought that they are ageing, that year by year they have fewer years to live, and must shortly be done with all terrestrial work. I cannot sympathize so much with that feeling, as with its opposite, viz., the desire to explore new regions of the Universe, which may be open to us when we are done with this one. But it is easy to understand the former feeling, and very common to experience it, when old interests or enjoyments disappear. When the bright gaiety of youth, the serene and sunny spirit of our early days has vanished, nothing can bring back to us "the splendour in the grass," and "glory in the flower,"—that sense of ineffable radiance of which

THE OLD AND THE NEW

Wordsworth speaks. But why should we lament because of that? We should try to keep the young child's heart within us for ever; the unsophisticated, natural, spontaneous, guileless heart, and that will preserve us from all *ennui*, or depression, in our age.

But, as to everything else, why should we regret the lapse of time, if it consolidates character, if it brings with it a widening horizon, maturer and more disciplined emotions, and a mellower view of life? If to grow old is not merely to add another blank to the years of our existence, if it is to be maturing in any sense,—while we bring forth the old, and use it up because of the new,—it is a matter for thanksgiving, and not for regret. Therefore, let none who have passed from the brightness of youth think regretfully of it. Let them retain the memory of the past, and keep up its spirit so far as it was benign; but let them remember that it existed only in order that what now is might issue from it.

A final counsel is suggested by this sentence, advice which may seem old and commonplace to some of us, but which no one is able to exhaust. It is this. Each day, attend to that day's duty faithfully, and take no thought for the morrow, with its prospective cares and possible burdens. Every hour brings its special bits of work to be done by us, and it passes. Let our whole strength go to each. Learn the secret of expectancy, not only because we are ignorant as to what the future may bring to us; but also because we know that bloom and fruit lie within the buds of present endeavour. Is there any better antidote to the restlessness of youth, or the life-weariness of middle age, than this old counsel of perfection, to "take no thought for the morrow"?

THINGS NEW AND OLD

"Learn of the bird" (as Luther said) "that sits on its branch and sings all day, and lets God think for it." Get quit of the anxiety induced by projecting thought too far forward, and anticipating distant to-morrows, with their possible cares, and the struggles which may,—but which also may not—be ours.

Doubtless we all wish to accomplish some things in the future, to which we have not attained in the past, to become more intelligent in mind, more considerate in action, more successful in the conquest of faults, more truthful in character, more generous to others, freer of envy, jealousy, and mistrust. But the experience of the past, its many failures, may lay an arrest upon our hopes, and bid us not be too sanguine of success. We may sink into the desponding mood already spoken of, and say "We are wrought upon by far-away influences, emanating from the fountain-head of our race, by tendencies inborn and engrained, which work on in the blood of humanity, and are sure to influence us still. Hereditary tendency will ripen into habit, and the hand of habit will hold us down, binding us with chains. Alien influences will surround us, and much of our future is already fixed, fixed because of what we now are, and of what we must therefore be in days to come." Now, all that is true, quite as true as is the counter-fact, which balances it upon the opposite side.

It is worthy of note, in passing, that all moral and spiritual truths may be arranged in pairs; so that over against each one of them a balancing truth lies in the opposite scale.

And this is the truth which balances the one just referred to. There is a possibility of our being changed in character continually, up to a certain point; nay, up

THE OLD AND THE NEW

to that point, to be undergoing a secret transformation, till we are altogether "new creatures" of habit and tendency. We can bring forth the old, and use up the old, because there is new power lodged within us, in that central underlying will that is free if not to renovate and recreate, at least to be renovated and recreated from sources above and beyond our ken. We can thus both alter our destiny, and have it altered for us; because we can break with that which enslaved us, and so change the currents of our inmost being. This is the first fact; and the second—which is like unto it—is a still weightier one, viz., that the Infinite works within the finite, both to will and to do. We are sure to be wrought upon in the future, as in the past, by influences emanating from the fountain-head of our race, which worked in the blood of our ancestors, and are now working in our own. But we are also open to the ever fresh and vital influence of the Infinite. We can receive of this continuously, and be "strengthened with all might" by means of it. It is the secret of perpetual youth, and also of hope in our struggle with familiar faults, and our efforts to subdue those evils which we inherit and deplore.

Now unto Him, etc.

IX.

The Communion Service.

In the Book of Exodus, chapter xii., verse 26, it is written—"What mean ye by this Service?"

A SACRED instinct of our nature leads us to commemorate the past. Every event, no matter how solemn and grand, soon fades into oblivion. That which is novel and fresh displaces the old, and the familiar; and, although events often repeat themselves—and there is little that is really new in the world at any time—yet each of them in its turn speedily dies, and is forgotten. It is with keen regret that we realise this forgetfulness; and the longing to rescue some fragments of the past from oblivion has given rise to human History, while the instinct that leads us to preserve it, is no obscure hint or "intimation of Immortality."

There are other ways of commemorating that which once was, but exists no longer, than by recording it in books or parchments, which are themselves imperfect and perishable; as by raising memorial stones, building monuments to the departed, or larger edifices associated with their names. Even the rude mounds of earth which mark the burial places of our Saxon ancestors contain memorials of a past age; our cromlechs and dolmens, speak to us of an almost vanished history; and the circle of Stonehenge is as eloquent to us as are the chronicles of Bede. Ruined temples, mouldering arches, and broken obelisks all subserve the same end; and in the case of monuments to the dead, the intention of their

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

pious builders was to transmit the memory of their friends or ancestors as far into the future as they could, and to preserve them from the ravages of decay.

This tendency, so natural to man, rises in significance when the thing to be commemorated and kept alive is a religious era, or a religious event. Such was that great stone which Joshua erected on the east of Jordan, when the tribes had crossed it to settle in Palestine. "Joshua," we read, "took a great stone, and set it up under an oak that was by the sanctuary of the Lord, and Joshua said unto all the people, behold this stone shall be a witness unto us, for it hath heard all the words of the Lord which he spake unto us." And the devout Israelites of after ages beholding that stone under the oak tree of Shechem, on the flank of Mount Ephraim, would feel emotions stirred within them grander and more solemn than any Greek could feel at Marathon, or any patriot before the grave of a national deliverer. For it spoke to all generations of a Law given from heaven, and of its repetition to Israel by their great leader before the land of Israel became theirs by possession. Palestine was peculiarly rich in such memorials of the past—localities around which divine associations gathered. In patriarchal times, there was Abraham's tomb; Mount Moriah, where the sacrifice of Isaac was arrested at the moment of the triumph of faith; Jacob's well (not far from this stone of Shechem); Bethel, where the angel-ladder was seen; Peniel, where the name Israel was given. And, as the years advanced, almost every city and village of the land, the very brooks, the hill slopes, and the caves became memorable from the great events connected with them, in the annals of that monumental race. Around each there gathered a little history. As yet

THINGS NEW AND OLD

unwritten on parchment, it was stamped upon the face of Nature, and transmitted from father to son on the living stream of devout tradition. So much so, that a study of the early history of the Jewish Church is, in a peculiar sense, topographical. It is a study of biography, and of family incidents, with which the records of place are richly interwoven.

But there is another and a more excellent way by which the past may be celebrated, and its memory kept alive. Not by a dead memorial but by a living rite, not by the silent masonry of a vast structure—liable to decay, and sure in time to moulder—but by the spiritual building up of an Institution which has within it the breath of life, and which draws men to its celebration by a spiritual tie. Far more powerful in its influence, and much more effective as a commemoration, would be the performance of a great religious Ceremony, to keep alive the memory of the past, than the act of merely looking on the grave or the birthplace of a departed man, beholding a relic of his time, or handling a thing he used. For in the former case heart meets with heart in the celebration; a multitude unite in the act with mutual sympathy and fellow feeling. That act carries back the thoughts of others to the age that is gone, to what it was witness to, and what it may have unconsciously prefigured. Such was the yearly celebration of the Jewish Passover. It pointed back to, and kept alive the memory of that great event which preceded the Exodus from Egypt. It was celebrated year by year with solemn pomp in a seven days' festival, itself the main event in every Israelitish year. And it stood contrasted with all other anniversaries and rites, in that at one and the same time, it both commemorated the

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

past and foretold the future. It was at once retrospective and prospective, celebration and prophecy in one. For Hebrew history carried on its stream the burden of a mighty hope, as well as the memory of a great deliverance.

Contrast the Jewish with the festal days of other nations. The poets of Greece and Rome sang, or delightfully fabled, of a golden age that was gone. Their historians recorded the deeds of the heroes of the past. Legislators ordained them days of commemoration, and joyously the people kept them. But the Hebrew legislator fixed for the nation a festival which marked the solemn past, while it still more significantly hinted at and foreshadowed the future. The golden Jewish age was not the patriarchal era of the past, but the fulness of the times when ancient types should be fulfilled, and ceremonial merged in that which it prefigured. The people were taught by their prophets not to look back with regretful longings to an age "when earth was nigher heaven than now," but to anticipate a time when it should be more manifestly near. Thus, while the main characteristic of the Hebrew religion was its prospective character, the prevailing attitude of the worshippers was one of expectancy, and of quickened outlook. Year by year throughout long centuries the people met on Mount Moriah, at once to recall the story of the nation's birth, and the future glories of a happier age. Their Passover had two sides; the one pointed backwards to the land of Goshen, the other forwards to Bethlehem and to Calvary.

Let us picture to our minds, as best we may, this yearly gathering of the tribes. Standing on the slopes of Mount Olivet, fronting the Temple, and thence looking across the

THINGS NEW AND OLD

narrow ravine of Jehosophat, one might have watched from sunrise till the day's decline, in the first weeks of the month Abib, a sight which has had no parallel in the world elsewhere. Never did men gather for any great commemoration with half so solemn an array as from Dan to Beersheba the tribes of Israel came in companies to the feast of the Lord in Jerusalem. With solemn gladness in their hearts, the excitement of religious hope filling their souls, the prospect of a joyous solemnity before them, they came from every corner of the land; travelling in bands, and probably singing their "songs of degrees" as they halted on their march. Aged men were there leaning on the staff, who had been at Jerusalem yearly through a long lifetime, but who would not stay at home while they had strength to travel. The warriors of the land were there; not in army ranks, but grouped in families. The husbandmen left their fields and vineyards, and came; the shepherds left their flocks, the fishermen their boats and nets; and young children were amongst them, who had begged to be taken as spectators of the scene. Tribe mingled freely with tribe; Ephraim not envying Juda, nor Juda vexing Ephraim. Fraternally they kept the Passover; and, as the Priests and Levites ministered at the altar, and slew the victims, the sound of the sweet temple music would be borne far up the slopes of Olivet, while the smoke from the sacrifices would cover its top as with a cloud. For seven days they kept this feast; and, with the sound of the temple-psalms in their ears, and the joy of the holy service thrilling their hearts, the tribes returned to their homes, the young children with their fathers. These children, we are told, would sometimes ask their parents, in the words of the text, "what mean ye by this service?" And an answer

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

had been prepared for them before the nation left the house of bondage: "Ye shall say unto them 'it is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel, when he smote the Egyptians and delivered our houses.'"

Since the Christian ordinance—which is the counterpart of this Passover of the Jews—is celebrated by us day by day, it may be profitable to devote a little time to an answer to the question which the Jewish children asked their parents, What mean we by this service? Why are we here to-day, and what are we here to do? What is the use and meaning of this rite? What is its significance to us as individuals, and to the Church? In striving to return a simple answer to the question, we may look at the ordinance under a fourfold aspect. If called upon to define in a single sentence the meaning of the rite, it might be somewhat in the following manner, "The Lord's Supper is that Sacrament of the Christian Church in which, through the symbols of bread and wine—consecrated, given, received, and partaken—the members of the Church commemorate the sacrifice and death of Christ, hold communion with Him, and are nourished thereby, dedicate themselves to Him, and enjoy fellowship one with another in the act." This definition contains, you will observe, four distinct and separate statements.

Proceeding therefore to consider each of these in succession, I remark, in the first place, that it is an ordinance of *Commemoration*. It is a fixed memorial of our Redeemer's Sacrifice. "This do," said our Master, "in remembrance of me." The visible sign accompanying it is explanatory of its nature. As the water sprinkled in Baptism—the symbol of our being cleansed

THINGS NEW AND OLD

from sin—casts light on the nature of the ordinance ; so the breaking of the bread, and the pouring out of the wine, commemorate the breaking of Christ's body and the voluntary pouring out of his life in sacrifice. As we receive the elements, thus broken and thus poured out, we recall with vivid distinctness that great voluntary sacrifice of our Lord's Life and Death. They are meant to imprint anew in our minds, and to fix lastingly in our hearts, the remembrance of our Saviour's Passion, and of all that has flowed out to us from his life, and love, and suffering. We bring these past events into our present consciousness, aided by their memorial symbols. The material elements suggest the spiritual fact that Christ gave away his life for us. In them we see—doubtless "through a glass darkly," yet vividly and really—the signs of that event which gathered to one point the whole work of Christ's life upon the earth. Very much as a picture or likeness of the dead recalls to us the once living form, our Lord intended that this ordinance should be the means of recalling his Presence and Sacrifice to our hearts. No other visible memorial of the Redeemer has been permitted to the Christian world ; no likeness of his fleshy frame ; no relic of his person, or his acts. These sacred elements, by himself appointed, and hallowed by his own words of institution,—these transient elements which appear and vanish, yet reappear continually in the Church, are the only outward memorial of Himself which he judged the world should have, or which it needed. And they are valuable to the Church only in so far as they suggest the presence of Him who appointed them. As a picture is valuable only in proportion as it suggests the person represented—and declines in value so far as it draws attention to itself, and does not permit our

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

thoughts to pass from it to the friend it represents—so with these elements. They have no inherent value, and are hindrances rather than helps to devotion, if they arrest attention or detain it, and are not merely aids to faith and memory.

You observe that it is by the use of a material symbol appealing to our senses—to the eye and to the taste—that the spirit is helped in this act of sacred reminiscence. Now, the early Church might have fancied that no such aid was needed. The first disciples might have imagined that the memory of Christ would survive without the need of a memorial—that they would be able to cherish with ease the spiritual remembrance of their Master, his image being for ever enshrined in the love and gratitude of their hearts. But Christ, in his minute foreknowledge, knew the weakness of the Church which he had founded. The future career of his disciples was distinctly before his eye when He instituted this rite, as was his own future of immediate suffering and death. He foretold to St. Peter the course of his actions; to the whole company of the twelve the sudden offence they would take, and the desertion they would practise. Nay, he told them of coming persecution, after he had left the world. He said that for his sake they too would be “despised and rejected of men,” and whosoever killed them would “think he did God’s service.” He knew that with the mere lapse of time, and under the strain of persecution, the purest devotion in the heart of a man was liable to fade; that in exact proportion to the height to which his disciples might rise at one hour of joy, in their dejection at another they would sink as low; and that their most sacred emotions would inevitably cool and wane. Our Lord knew, as none other knew, that the spiritual required to

THINGS NEW AND OLD

be encased, so to speak, within the framework of the sensible, if it was to take permanent hold of the human heart, and occupy it as its home. Therefore he instituted a material ordinance. Just as the spiritual nature of God the Father had to be brought down to man, and take up its residence within a human form, in order to possess a lasting control over humanity ; just as the Incarnation of the Son was needful to enable men to realize the personality of God, and worship Him in spirit ; so the material form of this Sacrament was devised to fix and keep alive the spiritual memory of Christ in the world. We are ourselves half matter, and half spirit, and the material half holds and enfolds the spiritual one. Exquisitely adapted then to the constitution of human nature are those material elements by which the more spiritual part of our worship is fixed, and rendered permanent.

We are thus also expressively taught, by the very elements which we handle and use, that Christian experience does not consist in mere feeling, in the enthusiasm of mere emotion ; but that it is a sacred spiritual life, based upon a sacred historical fact. And, for the same reason, we see the perpetuity of the ordinance, and its value for all time. No period will arrive, while this world lasts, in which the Christian religion will have become so much a matter of the spirit that the form of this Sacrament can be dispensed with. It is the hope of some visionary mystics that a period will be reached when material symbols may be discarded, while the religion of the spirit reigns supreme ; but so long as we inhabit frames of flesh, and so long as the body helps the soul as much as the soul helps the body, so long will celebrations be an aid to devotion. If at a time of rare spirituality the outward part of this sacrament might

THINGS NEW AND OLD

cease, for the same reason articulate prayer might cease, vocal praise might be discarded, and the whole machinery of worship be abolished from the earth. But not till the Church itself is translated to the higher sphere will its necessity cease.

Thus this Sacrament of the Eucharist is a continuous witness to Christ throughout the ages. Its celebration is the central means of handing down the memory of his love to all generations. It is a lamp passed from hand to hand, making known the glory and the grace of Christ, "that one generation may praise his works unto another, and declare his mighty acts, that they may abundantly utter the memory of his great goodness, that they may speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power." It is a public rehearsal from age to age of the facts on which the Christian Church is founded. As the Passover of the Jewish Church was a historical witness to the successive generations of the Hebrews of that event which heralded the exodus from Egypt, this ordinance is a historical proclamation to the Christian Church of its deliverance from bondage, of the victory which its Lord effected, and of his continuous power to meet the wants of all ages and of all men.

And when we remember that Christ personally instituted this rite, and hallowed it by observing it himself, we may see in the very fact a testimony to his solitary grandeur; and by implication to his divinity. It is the only rite which he personally both appointed and observed; for, while Baptism was ordained as the symbol of entrance into his Church, it was appointed after his decease.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

And the baptism which he underwent himself was different in kind from that which was appointed for his followers. This meeting with disciples, to break bread and to drink wine in remembrance of himself, was the only ordinance which he both set up for his Church, and partook of with his disciples. You observe he did not leave it to them to select at their own discretion some mode by which to commemorate him, to choose an anniversary day, and to keep it after their own fashion. Now, no one within the annals of history, no man but Jesus of Nazareth ever set up within his lifetime an ordinance like this, to keep alive his own memory, and partook of it with his first followers, presiding over them in the act. No mere man would have risked his prospects of remembrance by shewing such a desire for posthumous fame. Common men leave this to other common men, because they are not courageous enough to peril their name upon a thing which they cannot be sure will ever be carried into effect. But surely the man who alone had the courage to risk it must have felt that He had a unique claim upon the gratitude of men, springing out of a unique relation to all men; that He had a moral right to be remembered by all generations; and that by a circle at least, which would grow larger and larger with the flow of time, He would be thus gratefully remembered and adored. The mere fact, therefore, that Christ instituted this ordinance Himself, in his own lifetime, calmly calculating on the verdict of posterity, raises him at once to a position out of the category of men. Note also another difference between the act of our Lord, and the words which accompanied it, and the way which some men select to prolong their own and their friends' memory on the earth: the difference between saying,

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

"erect a monument to me when I am gone," e.g., some lofty monumental stone or building to defy the weather-changes, and the mouldering hand of time; and the simple precept, "Remember me in the fellowship of your hearts when you come together to partake of these emblems of my sacrifice." The one is the selfish desire for posthumous fame; the other is an unselfish longing for the good of men, a pure desire for the welfare of disciples, and the wish that they should be able to trace all mercies to their real source.

Now unto Him, etc.

X. The Communion Service.

(CONTINUED).

In the Book of Exodus, chapter xii., verse 26, it is written—"What mean ye by this Service?"

CONTINUING the subject of the last address, I say, in the second place, that not only is this Sacrament an ordinance of Commemoration, and an aid to Christian memory; but that it is also an ordinance of *Communion*, and a means of grace and life. It is one of those channels through which we receive the gifts of Christ, and by which our souls are nourished. As bread and wine (the symbols used) both satisfy the wants of the body and promote nutrition, so that which they represent (viz., Christ's life unto death, and the offering of his life in sacrifice), apprehended by the Church through faith, satisfies its deepest cravings, and promotes its spiritual growth. They refresh, and invigorate. They also nourish, and vitalize. The descriptive term, "The Lord's Supper," suggests this view of the ordinance. It is food and drink to the soul. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. But whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life: For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."

Now, it is when we approach this second aspect of the ordinance that the controversies of the Church arise, disputes that have rent it into sects, which have erred by

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

mutual misunderstanding and lack of charity ; however much they may have contributed to bring out many sides of truth, which is the one gain of controversy, and the one compensation for schism. It is at first sight strange that a simple rite, meant by Christ to be a uniting bond within his Church, the badge of union to himself, and the tie of fellowship amongst brethren, should have given rise to sharper and more embittered debate than more cardinal questions, as to the nature of our Lord's person and work. All Christians have agreed in observing this ordinance. The Roman and the Greek Christian, the Anglican, the Puritan, the Presbyterian, the Unitarian, all observe it ; while they have differed more widely as to its meaning than as to the meaning of the majority of the doctrines delivered to the Church. And one large section of our brethren in Christendom argues thus ; if Christians would but confine themselves to a simple commemoration of their Master's death, no such differences could possibly arise. Controversy would be spared, were we to revert to Scriptural simplicity, taking the one text as our guide, "This do in remembrance of me." But, while that is true, it is equally true that if Christ had meant us so to confine ourselves, and were there no more in the ordinance than the first of the four meanings we detect in it, these differences could never have arisen in the Church. Because they have arisen, we conclude that Christ's words imply something more. To partake of the sacred Eucharist is more than a mere memento or badge of discipleship, distinguishing the Christian from the non-Christian world. The ordinance is more than a mere ceremony. It is the Lord's Supper. It is the eating of a spiritual body, and the drinking of spiritual blood. "The cup of blessing which we bless," said St. Paul, "is

THINGS NEW AND OLD

it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" What then is it that we eat and drink in our act of communion? Our Lord said, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken for you." What is the precise meaning and force of that expression?

The Church of Rome, clinging to the letter of that sentence, asserts, that after the consecration of the elements, their material substance is destroyed; and in its place, while all the visible and sensible properties remain unaltered, the substance of Christ's body and blood is introduced. Therefore they say, there is now an intrinsic virtue in the elements, which is efficacious over all who partake of them, unless that efficacy is hindered by some mortal sin. It may surprise us that this doctrine ever found its way into the Church. But we will cease to wonder when we remember its very gradual growth; that, though its germ existed from Apostolic times, it was unknown for eight centuries as a dogma, and that it did not receive full sanction till the thirteenth; when we remember the darkness of the middle ages, the ease with which the mass of men accept a superstition; the power of the medieval Church, the elevation of the priest at the altar into the place of Him to whom this sacrament was designed to lead; and when we remember the figurative language of Scripture, which is so easily twisted by those who lack the clear eye of spiritual discernment. Nor will we greatly wonder when we remember how Luther, on this particular point, clung to the system, the larger part of which he had cast aside. That reformer held that, while the bread and wine of the Supper were not changed into the body and blood of Christ, the latter were present along with the elements;

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

that the glorified body of Christ was universally diffused through all space, and was peculiarly present in the consecrated elements of the Supper. "As in a red hot iron," he said (in a deceptive analogy), "two distinct substances, iron and fire, are united, so is the body of Christ joined with the bread and wine of the Eucharist;" and he held that this real presence imparted some special virtue to the elements, though they must be received by faith.

The catholic doctrine of the faith is this. It is only the spirit of Christ that is, or can be, omnipresent; and it is impossible for his body to be everywhere diffused. It was equally impossible for any of the properties of his Divine nature to belong to the earthly body of our Lord, as it was for that nature to be affected by the weaknesses of the humanity it assumed. The idea of a universal bodily presence is a contradiction in terms. A body is always bounded, limited, enclosed. It is only the spirit of Christ that can reveal itself to all men; and even although we were to admit the ubiquity of Christ's body, its special connection with the elements of the Lord's Supper is still unexplained. Its universal diffusion would be as directly contrary to the dogma in question as is the universality of his spirit. And it is incumbent upon us, in days in which a sacramentarian ritual teaches the impossible doctrine of the real presence of our Lord's body in this Sacrament—and in which that doctrine is styled the very essence of Christianity, and its opposite branded as infidelity—that we clearly know the grounds on which we reject it. It was the extreme tendency of this doctrine which drove the Swiss Reformers to an opposite extreme; which led Zwingli, and has led so many others, to hold that these elements are no more than signs. But that doctrine, again, is as

THINGS NEW AND OLD

extreme as is the error of Rome and of the ritualists of to-day. Just as a contraction may stand for a full word, and a written word for the thing it signifies, Zwingle affirmed that the bread and the wine stand for and represent our Lord. But if this be all, what is the meaning of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ? Has not the Church to receive something from its Lord, in the silence of this holy ordinance, which corresponds to the reception of food to nourish and invigorate us?

We hold to a Real Presence; but it is *the reality of a spiritual presence*. It is the presence of Christ under the visible symbol, which brings to us the pledge of his grace and gifts, even though now exalted to the throne of the universe. Though seated on that regal throne, He condescends still to be revealed to us in the breaking of bread. It is not that his real presence is there revealed, as if his presence elsewhere were unreal in comparison; but this is the chosen channel in which he unveils a Presence that is always and everywhere real, but neither always nor everywhere recognizable. He has selected, hallowed, and consecrated it, as the pathway along which He comes to meet with those who would meet with Him, and reveal to them the "*open secret*" of his presence; and He makes these elements the seals of all the other gifts He has brought into the world. He has given us these symbols of his sacrifice as a ladder by which we may ascend into his immediate presence. If, in our act of Commemoration, we find the elements to be links in a chain of sacred association, by which our minds may wander back into the past; in the act of Communion, we find the same elements a ladder by which we may now ascend up to the supernatural. Let us discard the term, "real presence" if we find it misleading; although I think

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

it has a sacred beauty which many will not willingly lose. Doubtless a presence cannot be unreal. If it exist at all, it cannot be shadowy or fictitious; and Christ's presence is an omnipresence. He is not more truly present in the elements of the Supper than he is daily present in our homes, in our consciences, or on the throne of Heaven. But these elements are appointed to help us, when we partake of them, to realise with special vividness that which is always real, and always fully present.

Much of the controversy which has raged around the words "This is my body which is broken for you"—a text which, it is no exaggeration to say, has given rise to more fierce debate than any other sentence of the Scriptures—has been foolish and futile. Christ did not mean to say, This bread, which I now take and hold up before you, is now my body in a sense in which nothing else is, and in which it was not shortly before; else he surely would have said, "This was once bread, but now it has become my body." That he was merely making use of an expressive figure to denote a great spiritual fact is evident from the analogy of his other words, "I am the door," "I am the vine, ye are the branches," "I am the good shepherd." In these cases there is no difficulty, and no dispute in the interpretation of the words. That they are figurative, and not literal, is apparent at a glance. Again, he said of the cup, "This is the New Testament in my blood," adding immediately, "do it in remembrance of me;" that is to say, commemorate me, once present but absent while you engage in the commemoration. It is self-evident that we cannot commemorate the really present; for remembrance implies absence. Either

THINGS NEW AND OLD

then there is no proper commemoration at all, or we commemorate one, who is not now present, in any mystic sense, in the elements. Our Lord seems, by the juxtaposition of these two sentences, to have expressly guarded against our mistaking the sign for the thing signified; but the majority of ritualists have ceased to commemorate, and are intent only upon adoration.

Then take the analogy of the words used as to the elder rite of the Passover, "Ye shall say," said Jehovah, "to your children when, in after ages, they ask you, what mean ye by this service? It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover." Now, literally, the later celebrations in Palestine were not the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover in Egypt, for that was a single act or event; but they recalled that Passover to mind. And the Jews actually said, we are told, as they celebrated their annual Passover, "This is the bread of poverty and affliction which our fathers did eat in the land of Egypt." Was there a real presence, we might ask, of the old unleavened bread of Egypt in Palestine for ages? Manifestly the Jewish Fathers were speaking in a figure. They meant to say; "this which we now eat represents and recalls to our mind what our fathers did in the house of bondage; and recalling it, our minds are fed or nourished by the recollection."

Then, when we remember that our Lord uttered these words while He was himself alive, before his death and the glorification of his body, it is more evident still that He spoke in a figure. As the body of Christ was then alive, the first disciples at least could not imagine that they were receiving it in any literal manner. They had just partaken of the Paschal supper, in which, as we have said, the very same form of words was used—"It is the

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

Lord's Passover." They could have no doubt in their minds that that phrase did not mean the action of the Lord in passing over; but the sign, the token, the memorial of that act. And now our Lord stood before them in that guest chamber of Jerusalem, about to die, and prophesying of his death, but still alive; and he took the bread, and break it, saying, "This is my body." Is it not clear that He meant to say, Let this be to you the symbol of my body; I am about to be offered up; to be broken, as I now break this bread; my life is about to be poured out in sacrifice, as I pour out this wine for you. Take these, and use them in memory of me; and while you partake of them by the bodily sense, receive me by faith into your inmost spirits, that you may grow thereby.

The bread and the wine which He held in his hand, and separated (as our forefathers used to say) "from a common to a sacramental use" could undergo no change into Christ's body and blood while he remained alive. Either, therefore, the first and the most solemn of all the celebrations of this eucharistic meal was no true sacrament (because Christ's body was not in it), or all the subsequent celebrations of it have not been receptions of his bodily presence in the elements, but only commemorative of the past, and communicative of a spiritual presence. Nay, if Christ had meant the word "is" to be taken literally by his Church, would He not have guarded against the mistakes of his followers by saying, "This is my body which is to be broken for you, this do ye by and bye in remembrance of me?" But he made use of these elements to remind his Church of the future, that He who is ever present in Nature is the same Being that was once present on our earth as a man; that beneath the outward form of the symbols, as beneath the outer raiment of

THINGS NEW AND OLD

Nature, there lives a glorious Substance, the personal God who was revealed to the world in Chrst ; not merely a vague omnipresent spirit, but a living, loving Will, the presence of Him who gave Himself for the life of the world. Is it a slight gain to have the truth brought home to our hearts in this sacred ordinance—that the very God who created all things, and is sustaining all, did not despise this earth, but dwelt upon it, and hallowed it by his presence ; that He gave his life for us in sacrifice, and that He is everywhere present in a most real sense to manifest himself to us all. He could say, as no creature (without contradiction or blasphemy) could affirm, “This is my body,” because He was one with God, one with Nature, and within all Nature. He alone could choose Bread, the symbol and the means of nourishment, as the type of all that He is to the souls of men.

In this sense we find a true meaning in “the real presence,” when we understand that historic phrase spiritually. The presence of Christ is indeed universally real ; but in its absolute fulness it is only realised by the faith of the disciple’s heart. The belief of the Church in his presence is similar to that of a devout philosophy which detects the perpetual real presence of a Power within Nature, and which adores a living Will behind phenomena. Christ is nigh unto every one of us, in our very heart and conscience ; for we “have not to ascend into Heaven to bring him down from above, nor have we to descend into the deep to bring him up from beneath,” any more than we have “to seek for the living amongst the dead.” And the celebration of this Sacrament does not really bring Christ any nearer to us ; it only enables us to realise Him who is always near, and to hold communion with him.

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

Here we may have the aid of an analogy. St. Paul said to the Athenians, "God dwelleth not in temples made with hands," by which he did not mean to deny that He dwelt there, but to assert that He did not dwell in any exclusive sense on holy ground, that he was not there more than elsewhere. So when our Lord affirmed, "this is my body," he did not mean to limit his presence to it; but he singled out the Bread, and honoured it as the fittest symbol of his nature, and its reception by disciples as the most significant channel of his revelation. Thus it is that we eat spiritual food, and drink spiritual drink, in the sacrament of Holy Communion. It is by faith that we do so. "Believe, and thou hast already eaten," said St. Augustine. And, while it is needful for some of our brethren in the Church to remember that the kingdom of God is "not meat nor drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost;" it is equally necessary for others to remember, that as bread and wine both satisfy the senses and promote nutrition, so that which they represent—Christ's sacrifice for the world—apprehended by the Church through faith, satisfies our deepest cravings, and promotes our growth.

There is no charm in the ordinance, no magical or mechanical virtue in the elements. Their mere reception will not guard our spiritual life from decay. But when the communicant, appearing in the true eucharistic attire of faith and hope and charity, opens his soul to the sweet influence of Heaven, hungering and thirsting after righteousness; then, blessed is he. For along that pathway of love and aspiration, furrowed out by the power of the Spirit, the Redeemer of his life sends a current of inspiration and of joy. The very life of Christ is poured into the life of his members, as the branches of the vine

THINGS NEW AND OLD

derive their nutriment from the central stem. The Holy Eucharist is symbolical and allegorical, as well as real. It is a veil which conceals much, but through it we are able to apprehend a mystery we cannot comprehend ; a mystery that was hid for generations, but made known in the life of Christ on earth. We have fellowship with him through that medium, when the realization of the elements vanishes in the discernment and appropriation of that which they symbolize.

We now consider a third aspect of this ordinance briefly. It is that of *Dedication*. We not only commemorate the past sacrifice of Christ, and hold present communion with Him through faith, but we also offer ourselves as living sacrifices to Him who gave Himself for us. The communicant proclaims, by his own free act, that he has rationally embraced the Christian faith, that he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ ; and subscribing his name on the public roll of the Church, he vows a vow of loyalty to Christ. It is for this reason that the ordinance is called a sacrament. The word, sacrament, does not occur in Scripture. It is an ecclesiastical term, derived from the soldier's oath of fealty to his chief ; and it points to the vow of dedication and allegiance which the communicant makes to his Lord or Chief, a vow of abstinence from sin. We come here to-day to renew our vows, to dedicate ourselves afresh. Very early in the history of the Church this idea of consecration entered into the celebration of the ordinance,—long before we can detect the least trace of the doctrine of virtue in the elements.

Thus in Pliny's well-known letter to the emperor Trajan, in which he refers to the early Christians, and their celebration of the rite, we read—" They assemble

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

early in the morning, before day, to sing a hymn to Christ as God ; and then they bind themselves by a sacrament or oath not to rob, steal, or live unhallowedly, not to break their word, or falsify their trust ; and after they have eaten together, they depart home." Thus early did the Church realize the idea of a dedication to God in the ordinance ; and wherever it has been truly observed, the Church has surrendered itself to him. It is therefore continually reminded that it is "not its own," that it "has been bought with a price ;" and that, as the property of its purchaser, it belongs characteristically and distinctively to Christ. Our presence here to-day is both a confession of our faith, and a profession of discipleship. But the life which we dedicate, having been "redeemed from destruction" by Christ, belongs to Him, and we but give him back his own.

As the light and heat, given forth by combustion, is light and heat once derived from the sun itself ; so with our lives in relation to his. The analogy is significant. The coal now burnt on our fires is giving forth the very rays which it received centuries ago in the primeval forests of the world. The solar light and heat then absorbed by the growing vegetation, and incorporated into the very substance of its tissues, has lain latent for ages, buried in the strata of our earth, where the once vital timber has been converted into inanimate coal. That light and heat is now radiated forth from countless household fires, proclaiming its origin ; telling us that the same sun shone in the early world as now lights up our firmament daily from the east. And it is the same with the light and the warmth of the Christian's living sacrifice. They come from the central Sun. They enter into the souls of men, enlightening and warming ; but they abide

THINGS NEW AND OLD

not there. They may not be kept latent in the soul, but must be radiated back in the sacrifices which we lay upon God's altar. The fire burns within the Church ; and the light which it gives forth, its Master has called " the light of the world," because it is an emanation from himself.

And here let me point out a vital link of connection between this third view of the ordinance and those which preceded it. It is only they who hold real communion with Christ who are able really to dedicate themselves, while their act of reception is at the same time an act of self-surrender. Now, Christ we have represented to you as the food of the Christian's soul. Mark then what was the spiritual food of which He partook while He sojourned upon earth: " My meat," he said, " is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish his work." The doing of his Father's will was therefore the spiritual food of Christ. And he said, " as the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father ; even so, he that eateth me, he shall live by me." Here then we have our Lord's own illustration of the process by which the Christian dedicates his life to God. As our bodies are nourished by the food they receive, our souls are nourished by the submission of our wills to a higher Will, into the very texture and substance of which they are assimilated.

Throughout his human life, our Lord lived by a process of perpetual self-renunciation ; and the disciple becomes one with Him, in so far as he thus renounces himself, loses himself to save himself. He gives up his selfish will that he may be thoroughly pervaded by the will of Christ and can without presumption say, " It is not I who live, but Christ who liveth in me." Thus our Lord's prayer is fulfilled, " I in them, and Thou in me, that they

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

may be one in us." The eating and drinking of the elements of the Eucharist is an apt image of this whole process. The human will feeds on the Divine, as truly as the body is fed by earthly elements. In both cases there is assimilation, which amounts to virtual incorporation; and figuratively we may even use the Roman term, and say that our will is transubstantiated with Christ. This is the divine bread, of which whosoever eats shall never hunger. This is the divine water (or wine), of which whosoever drinks shall never thirst.

You will see how beautifully this doctrine connects our act of Communion with our act of Dedication. We hold communion with Christ through the conscious and voluntary subjection of our will to his. Not, be it observed, by the prostration of our intellect—for the active exercise of that is needed in the very act of submission—but by the voluntary conscious subjection of our wills; the hearty, joyous surrender of our lives, to Him who is their natural Lord and righteous Governor. Contrast this act with that which ritualism enjoins upon the devotee. It bids him come with the faith that virtue lies locked up within the elements, which will pass forth mysteriously upon him, or from the celebrant to the communicant, and pervade their being with its power; that the bread and the wine will send some mystic influence through the very framework of the body, and flood the senses with an interior light, while the intellect and the will are merely passive instruments in the process.

Such a doctrine cannot satisfy the soul of a rational man. It keeps him in the dark as to the whole nature of the process, and bids him trust in a mystery, in some charm or spell which it is said Christ has himself attached to the ordinance. But mystery cannot by itself satisfy

THINGS NEW AND OLD

the soul. Christ is the light of the world. His communion is communion with the light ; and while on the earth He discouraged all blind trust even in his own power. He desires that we should know why we trust in Him, and what He really brings to us as his gift. He desires to be chosen by us, by the suffrage of the free will of an intelligent universe, as its rightful Lord and Sovereign. In short, while Christ and his life-work shine with their own pure light, while they are their own light-bearers, Christ demands our free submission, our hearty and spontaneous dedication ; because we have discovered his divine attractiveness, because we have sat down under his shadow with great delight, and found his food to be sweet to our taste.

Lastly, and in few words, note the fourth aspect of this ordinance. It is not only an act of Commemoration, an act of Communion, and an act of Dedication, but it is also one of *Social Fellowship*. We have communion not only with our Lord and Master, but also with our brethren in the act. The ordinance is pre-eminently a social meeting of the Church, in which the ties of brotherhood and friendship ought to be ratified. In it all Christians enjoy equal privilege. There is a common table of communion ; one festival for all. Is it not therefore designed to teach us, that however different we may be in character or attainment, in culture or position, we form a single brotherhood, and are "members one of another ;" and to teach us that the points on which we agree are more important to us than those on which we may happen to differ? If all the members of the Church are "heirs together of the grace of life," this ordinance becomes the great foe of the spirit of *caste* in the Christian commonwealth. All distinctions and

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

barriers are broken down around the holy table ; and it is the only social gathering, in which the highest and the lowest—whether in intellect or rank, or in maturity of Christian character—sit down together without the recognition of these distinctions. The brother who is weak in faith, if nevertheless he loves the Master, she who is holding but by the hem of the garment, and the brother of low degree, are raised in this ordinance, for the time being, to equal rank with the greatest in the kingdom of the world or of grace.

Therefore, the feeling of sympathy with all, brotherly-kindness towards all, and charity as to all, should reign in the heart of each communicant. We should all come forward ready to bear each other's burdens ; and those who are strong especially ready to bear the infirmities of the weak. It is for this reason that we do not dispense the ordinance in private dwellings, though there is no precept of Scripture forbidding it. We come together in the Church, to proclaim our unity. The early Christians realised this social feature of the sacrament in their private celebrations of it. We, in our altered times, for the same reason prefer the public ceremonial. They celebrated it every day, at the close of the principal meal. In their hands the rite degenerated, and became too social and too secular, till, as conducted in the city of Corinth, it called forth the keen rebuke of St. Paul, as a reformer of abuses. Gradually it was changed to a weekly ceremonial. By and bye it sank into a monthly festival, as by very many of our fellow Christians it is now observed. Our Lord prescribed no rules as to its frequency. These He has left to the discretion of the Church. The only thing He has fixed is the spirit of the celebration.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

And since it is an ordinance of social fellowship, in which all sit down as brethren, what are the feelings towards the Church Catholic, and towards every individual in it, which should animate us here to-day? Are they not those of mutual love and charity, of forbearance, of sympathy, of fellow-feeling, and forgiveness? If we have a grudge against any one, in God's name let that be laid aside, else our celebration will be selfish and not social, and therefore vain. May God remove all grudges from our hearts against our fellow-creatures, as well as against our fellow-Christians. If we come to the altar with an offering, but remember on the way that a brother has aught against us, let us leave our gift before the altar, and mentally go our way, in spirit be reconciled to our brother, and then come and offer our gift.

And who are they with whom we are associated in this act of celebration? Not merely those who worship with us here, but the whole Church of God throughout the world; with an innumerable company, some of whom are now resting from their labours in another sphere. We come associated with the glorious company of the Apostles, with the goodly fellowship of the Prophets, with the noble army of Martyrs, and with all the Saints of God throughout the world; and in the celebration of the festival, thoughts of the whole brotherhood, its vast compass and varied character, should blend lovingly in our minds with our personal realisation of Christ. We commemorate the living and the dead. We are one with the Church of the Apostles, of the Fathers, of the Middle Age, of the Reformation, and of the Modern Age, with the Church on earth and the Church in heaven, with the Church of the past of the present and of the future. And as we engage in the celebration, thus accompanied, let

THE COMMUNION SERVICE

each esteem his brother more highly than himself ; for no one can have true communion with the spirit of Jesus Christ who is himself in heart a sectarian. It is the infinite love of Jesus Christ to us, and to all our brethren, that we are met to commemorate and to receive ; and we ought assuredly to rejoice in that which our brethren are receiving, as much as in that which we hope ourselves to share. We will profit by God's gift to them ; but whether we do so or not, let us learn to give thanks for gifts which pass our door, but which the generous Giver has thought fit to send elsewhere.

Let all rejoice with exceeding great joy who are thus prepared, in true communion attire, to compass God's holy altar. Let those who are "hungering and thirsting after righteousness" rejoice, for "they are blessed,"—their very thirst is blessed—and "they shall be filled." Let all weak and timid spirits lift up their voice with strength, in praise and prayer. "Lift it up, be not afraid;" for this is a faithful saying, and worthy of all our acceptation, that He who has led our captivity captive, is really present in this place, to reveal his grace and power. Therefore, in what an Apostle has called an "holy boldness," let all the penitent and faithful draw near and take this sacrament, appropriating the pledges of eternal life.

Now unto Him, etc.

XI.

* The Power of Prayer.

In the Epistle of S. Paul to the Philiippians, chapter iv., verse 6, it is written—"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

As to the spirit which St. Paul here counsels us to cherish toward God, observe that he first tells us to "be careful for nothing"; and that is to say to preserve a serene unanxious mind with reference to God's care of us. The advice is the same as that which our Lord gave (possibly it was suggested by it), "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Behold the fowls of the air: They sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; and yet your Heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not much better than they? Therefore take no thought; for your Heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Baptised with the spirit of those wonderful words, St. Peter counselled his fellow Christians to "cast all their care on God, because He cared for them"; and St. Paul told his friends at Philiippi to be "careful for nothing." Observe

* In a prefatory note to this address, when printed at Christmas in 1872, the following occurred:—"There is nothing so bad as 'novelty' in my beliefs regarding Prayer. A new doctrine touching the universal practice, and unalienable right, of the Christian heart, would carry its own refutation with it. Nor do my views differ from those of the Church Catholic, when she turns her reason as well as her instincts to the *rationale* of petition."

THE POWER OF PRAYER

what this frame of mind is, which our Lord, in his Sermon on the Mount, and the chief apostles after Him, desire us to cherish, in reference to all earthly good ; because it presents us with one feature of the Christian ethic, which confronts the modern spirit in its anxious passion for accumulation, its restlessness and feverish haste, about things that are purely transitory.

If the spirit of that divine discourse pervades the soul of the disciple, one result will be, that anxious-mindedness receives a death-blow ; that care for the morrow, and distrust of God—which so often disguises itself under the garb of earthly prudence—will vanish. Our Lord wished his disciples to be of another spirit than that of the secular world,—eager to accumulate, covetous of external blessings, and therefore distracted by the fluctuations of their outward life. To his eye all anxiety implied distrust of God, and was a sign of worldliness, if not of secret atheism. But with a real trust in God, with confidence in his wisdom, love, and fatherliness, anxiety as to temporal affairs would vanish in the faith that He who feeds the young ravens when they cry—He without whom no sparrow falls to the ground, and who sustains all Nature by his presence—provides for the wants of the meanest of his creatures, and will continue to do so, with the constancy of unchangeable love. No one, however, can be thus devoid of temporal care, who is not animated by faith in the eternal care of God. It is hopeless to ask men to relinquish the former, unless they have the latter abiding in the heart. It is the absence of religious trust, that is to say of belief in an omni-present and all-prescient love, that begets “care” in the heart of the creature. Missing the Infinite, man grasps the finite good, clings passionately to it, and

THINGS NEW AND OLD

struggles with a melancholy earnestness to become his own Providence. But with ~~this~~ faith in God—the belief that He has not launched a world into existence from which thereafter He sits remote, merely watching it, or now and then interfering to help a stumbling creature when it calls; the belief that He remains within his own creation, as its inmost and essential life; the great Sustainer, in whom it lives and moves, and has its being—with this faith, I say, the heart of the creature who is also a child, may well disburden itself of care. It is careful for nothing, simply because it believes that God is careful for everything; that his tender mercies are over all his works; and that the laws by which He governs the world are but the expressions of his living will, the signs of his immediate agency; not the handiwork of a retired Artificer, but the manifestation of an ever present God. The very omnipresence of God, and the fact that his throne is not more truly in the distant Heaven than it is within the hearts of his children, should itself breed the spirit of trust and interior peace.

And this sweet temper of tranquility, when it has once taken possession of the soul, will accomplish such results as these. God being everywhere recognised (the laws of the Universe being the mere expressions of the way in which He is sustaining and caring for his creatures, God being the interior light of the soul, as well as the exterior light with which all Nature is radiant), thanksgiving will arise as the spontaneous tribute of the heart, and adoration will be its natural hymn. The form and motion of every atom within the Universe revealing a present God, and the whole outcome and evolution of nature's forces being a revelation of his attributes, "whatsoever comes to pass" will be interpreted as his decree. And the

THE POWER OF PRAYER

Christian, realising his dependence, and his absolute indebtedness for the least mercy, while he is "enriched unto bountifulness" by the Father of all mercies, will approach him in the love that casts out fear, and in the unwavering faith that all things work together for his good.

Consider then what the creature who is "careful for nothing," disciplined into this Christian frame of feeling, believes as to the arrangements of the physical Universe, as these bear upon himself, his friends, or his fellow-men; in short, his faith in reference to all external circumstances. He believes that the Infinite Father has arranged the whole course of his Providence with the completest mastery of all emergencies, with a necessarily unerring wisdom, and a love that is absolute; that whatsoever comes to pass is unchallengeably good, simply because "it is the Lord's doing, and is marvellous in our eyes." He learns to interpret apparent disaster, as blessing in disguise. He remembers that what may seem an evil to himself, may be the best arrangement for the Universe at large; and therefore for himself, as a part of it. He knows that he is too ignorant of secret causes, and the remoter issues of events, to presume to call them evil because they transcend his calculus.

Experience has often shewn him that unimagined good results from that against which flesh and blood rebelled, and against which his selfishness had chafed. He finds, as he recalls "the way by which he has been led," that to have escaped what he deprecated as an evil, would have been unmingled calamity; and to have possessed that which in his blindness he craved, would have been a curse. Therefore, if some fiery trial overtakes him, he does not think that some strange thing has

THINGS NEW AND OLD

happened to him, but he rejoices that God's will is done. He glories in the consummation of that will. He is certain first that it cannot be defeated, and secondly, that it is infinitely wise, and utterly benignant. Thus he finds it—as one of the members of this church during last week so well expressed it—“to be a higher and more blessed experience to be in everything giving thanks, than in anything making requests; beholding, in all that takes place, matter for thanksgiving, rather than for petition.”

St. Paul, you observe, here counsels us “in everything” to approach God, with thanksgiving and prayer combined. Well, as I have repeatedly pointed out, the petition “Thy will be done” is the undertone of all true prayer. It is, in different aspects, the essence, or the presupposition, or the appendix of every request, worthy of a child on earth to its parent in Heaven. But it is not a mere cry of ignorance, couched in the modest phraseology of submission. It is an intelligent assertion, the embodiment of a rational belief, that the Divine will is infallibly working out its remote transcendent purposes. And that will is not an absolute enigma to the creature. It is intelligible in part; and is expressed to us by whatsoever comes to pass, in the outward world of material force and physical adjustment. But in the inward world of human experience it is not so infallibly expressed; for there we meet with moral evil and its consequences, which we may not trace back to the direct efficiency of God. His mind is legible, and his presence felt, in every movement of the outer universe. There we trace everything to his arrangement and control. It is otherwise in the region of our own humanity. In it, alas! we find an element which He did not create, which is interfering

THE POWER OF PRAYER

with his plans, and marring his creation. Therefore, in the former case, our highest language is that of adoration and acquiescence, while in the latter it becomes petition.

We may surely supplicate Him for the removal of all that interferes with the order that is his. We do not look up, and say, "All that we see is the expression of thy will, and therefore let that will be done." On the contrary, we perceive very much that is contrary to his will, much that we would fain see abolished. Therefore we say, "Let this evil be overcome: whatsoever mars thy kingdom, or postpones its realization in us, destroy it in thy mercy, Good Lord."

Turning our eye outwards to the realm of physical law, we trace every evolution of Nature to the will of its Sustainer; we confess that we are ignorant of the scope of his beneficent purposes, and the final destination of his plans; that we can only decipher these, by humbly studying the way in which they are fulfilled. We feel that it would be supremest arrogance in us to suggest that He should alter them, to suit the ignorant or selfish wishes of his creatures. Surely, when we think of Him who, in his Divine prescience and care has arranged the whole circumstances of our outward lot, and when we remember our ignorance of what is best for us, we will see that the root of all our feelings toward Him should be instinctive trust, filial confidence, and acquiescence in whatever his prescient love ordains.

Then, have we not learned to interpret seeming disaster as the sign of loving discipline, as a blessing in disguise? Who within the Church is so enamoured of material well-being, so covetous of prosperity, as not to know how often these things magnetise the heart, and lead it captive. Therefore, whilst they are God's gifts

THINGS NEW AND OLD

to be received with thanksgiving, their opposites may be equally divine, no less characteristic of the Giver, and sealed by the sign-manual of our Heavenly Father. It was a saying of Lord Bacon, no less beautiful than true, "Prosperity was the blessing of the Old Testament ; Adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth with it the greater benediction, and the clearer evidence of God's favour." Who are we that we should presume to suggest an alteration that would be an improvement in giving us more outward felicity than we now have ? That we could suggest even an improvement in the weather is quite as irrational, and irreverent, as was the assertion of King Alphonso that he could have proposed improvements on the solar system ; but, that we should beseech Him night and day for an alteration in our inner life, in our hearts, wills and aspirations, is a part of the very alphabet of our duty.

"In everything," says St. Paul, "let your requests be made known unto God." But it is important to note that requests may be of two kinds ; either for the accomplishment of a perfect Will, or for alterations and interferences with what that Will is bringing to pass. The former is but an expression of the creature's dependence, and his indebtedness for everything to God. But if we ask, or even suggest, that the will of God towards us should take a particular form in deference to our strong desires, we are virtually dictating to Him. Prayer for the simple accomplishment of the Divine Will has no possible restriction. It has the widest amplitude of range, and may sweep over the whole area of the universe with its plea. And be it noted that in our approaches to God we may unpresumptuously make reference to any, or to all of the ways in which He manifests his will, and may say in

THE POWER OF PRAYER

reference to each, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven." But then we are aware that God's will must infallibly be done within external nature. In that realm it is always being accomplished "without haste yet without rest," and our petitions can neither hasten nor retard it; while we are conscious that it is not always fulfilled within ourselves. Therefore it is that prayer should take the form of adoration and thanksgiving in reference to the one class of events, but of supplication in reference to the other. For example, we do not need to ask God to "do his will" amid the waves of the sea. When we say "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof," it is the mere response of human reason, interpreting and sympathising with the unconscious praise of Nature. But we ask Him to "do his will," within natures morally disordered, in souls that have cast off his yoke.

In connection with this, it should be noted that prayer in the sense of detailed petition, would—in a sinless world—be superseded by higher acts of thanksgiving and adoration. From the few hints we obtain in Scripture of the employments of the blessed in the future life, we perceive that their attitude towards God is not that of petitioners soliciting Him for favours. Conscious that they are infallibly cared for, their language is that of praise; their work is unselfish service. It is because we belong to a degenerate race, that with us meanwhile petition takes the place of adoration, and must occupy so large a portion of our prayers. Had we no disorder within, ours too would be exclusively the language of praise, "Blessing, and glory, and honour, and power unto Him that sitteth upon the Throne for ever and ever." But with our prospective hopes, should we not approximate towards that worship by slow unfaltering steps? We

THINGS NEW AND OLD

must petition meanwhile ; but requests will lessen, and adoration will increase, as spirituality deepens in the comprehension of God's plans. So long as we are suppliants, our requests must bear upon our own disorder, and its conquest by God's grace. We pray for the extinction of all that impedes his will within us, and around ; for help to enable us to arise, and do it ; for patience to bear it ; for knowledge of its requirements, and ability to conform to them ; for the abolition of all evil, and the supremacy of all good ; for the victory of truth, the diffusion of light, the spread of righteousness, and the universal reign of charity.

Now unto Him, etc.

XII.

The Power of Prayer.

(CONTINUED).

In the Epistle of S. Paul to the Phillippians, chapter iv., verse 6, it is written—"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God."

IF we, as the spiritual children of our Father in Heaven, make the doing of his will the alpha and the omega of our prayers, is it not our bounden duty to learn the nature of that will, by observing how it is done; and thereby to acquaint ourselves with the character of God? Are we to go on for ever stammering as in infancy, supposing his will to be this or that according to our fallible desires, and supplicating Him with irregular and vacant cries, "if it be thy will, if it be a possibility of thy government, and within the limits of thy plan, if it be consistent with thy vast and unknown scheme, gratify our strong desires O Lord, for they are by Thyself created?" Are we to continue this spirit of undisciplined childhood, and not rather open our inward eye to behold what the Divine will is; and, having learned to adore it, "in everything to give thanks" for it? Furthermore, since God is seeking to inform us of his will by all we see in Nature, by the whole scope of Providence, and the entire discipline of life, "day unto day teaching us this knowledge," with "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little," we are surely most unapt scholars in his school, if we do not find it out; if we prefer the irregularity of incessant petition, the clamour of selfish

THINGS NEW AND OLD

desire, to the submission of the creature, and the thanksgiving of the docile heart? Be it ours "in everything to let our requests be made known"; but also to see that these requests be disciplined ones, schooled into accordance with the sovran will. We may surely include within that will "the evolution of the entire material universe through pre-established harmony to its predestinated goal." But never let us cloak our selfishness under the guise of piety, by suggesting what we would like that will to be; approaching God as we would approach some earthly potentate of fickle and indulgent purpose; suggesting that while his will is ultimate, we would like its decisions to be adjusted according to our fallible desires. Let us go to God in all emergencies, in every changing mood, at all hours of the clock, telling Him the whole story of our wants, unburdening our spirits, and laying our wishes at his feet; but let each want, and wish, and longing be chastened into meek submission. And, in everything, first "give thanks." For if we do so, we will be more truly acquiescent, less anxious about worldly gain, or the favour of our fellowmen, more ardent in our longing for spiritual things; and will recognise in the commonest work, in the tasks of the day-labourers' routine, and even in our keenest sorrows, the outcome of Divine beneficence. Thus too we shall learn the sweet secret of prayer as a spiritual lever to move our wills, as an appeal which brings down the answering help of God, as an agency by which the weakest who uses it may be endowed with the strength of the Eternal, and experience "the peace that passeth understanding."

Then looking within, who does not perceive the immeasurable range of this power of prayer? Note the

THE POWER OF PRAYER

reason of the difference between the two spheres of agency. There is fixity in the world without ; because it is the realm of unchallengeable wisdom and unerring order. That region of "adamantine law" is presided over by the vigilance of a sleepless love. But within, there is the realm of free will ; that is to say, there is something that is not fixed and determined with the unchangeableness of fate. We are conscious of moral freedom, and we inherit the sad legacy of spiritual disorder. These are historic proofs that our interior world is not under the fixity of adamantine law. Therefore it is that I ask you to hold fast to the doctrine of moral freedom ; for with it our responsibility stands or falls, and with it the right to petition is upbound. It is because we are not helpless automata that we can appeal to God for help. And He, who is absolutely free, within whose nature there is an infinite reserve of power—unexhausted in the creation and support of the existing universe—may surely send down unto the free natures of his children in answer to their prayer, fresh influence, endowing them from above.

In this connection, I quote to-day what I said seven years ago on this subject, "The laws of the material universe being the laws of God, and He being always their directing Agent, are unchangeable. But these laws are susceptible of countless combinations. Taken all together, they may produce an indefinite variety of results. The results will vary with the conditions under which the laws are called into action. They combine now to give us a bountiful harvest, again to produce blight and famine ; now to preserve animal life in health and vigour, again to induce disease and death. But we, human agents in God's world, aid in the production of

THINGS NEW AND OLD

physical change, and in the modification of external laws. Human life is carried on through a constant effort put forth by man upon nature. All vital forms, as well as inanimate structures, yield to his activity. With him to live is to interfere with nature's laws. The component elements of our atmosphere are themselves modified by every breathing of our lungs, by the fires we burn, by the fields we drain, and the forests we cut down. The very centre of gravity of our globe itself can be proved to have been altered by the changes wrought by man upon the surface of the earth. And the remedies which we devise to ward off disease, or to remove it when present, are interferences with the laws which have produced it. We can alter no law, but we can deflect the destination of many; so that they yield results which are not deadly, but beneficent. Thus it is that the Author of the outward and physical universe permits us, in a real and undoubted manner, to interfere with his handiwork; while we who interfere are a part of that handiwork. Nay, this kind of interference, carried on by every living creature, is one of the conditions of life upon our planet.

"Now, by prayer we come into direct contact with the Author of all physical law; and the scientific difficulty vanishes, if this be frankly conceded. The supremacy of law is undisturbed, its unchangeableness is fully recognised; but the power lodged within the will of man to bring new agencies to bear upon existing ones is also recognised: that power being stimulated and set in motion from a point beyond the chain of physical sequence. We ask the Author of the laws of Nature,—laws which we interpret as the expression of his will,—to help us to bring new agency to bear upon that which

THE POWER OF PRAYER

is to our vision disordered, and needs readjustment. The answer comes to us in the imparted ability to co-operate with Him, in rectifying anomaly, and conforming to the neglected order; as, for example, by obeying sanitary laws, we promote the health of the community. We ask God to help us to do his will, by the fulfilment of our duty; not to interfere, while we lie supine and listless, or stand still hoping to see a miracle wrought before our eyes; but while we work, with hand and mind and heart in the doing of his will,—cleansing a city, or preventing its overcrowding, disinfecting houses and lanes in time of pestilence, and obeying the eternal laws of health,—we ask God to work in us to will and to do of his good will."

To this, I give my full adherence still; only, I now prefer to look on all disease blight and pestilence, rather as infractions of the laws of God; for which we may validly ask the abolition. We may reasonably pray for the removal of that within physical nature which mars the Divine order, and interferes with the realisation of God's will.

Before closing I refer again to that sphere within which the power of Prayer is really immeasurable, and in which we are all sluggards in its exercise. As a power which "prevails with God," in the readjustment and regeneration of our natures, Christendom has not yet learned what it may accomplish, and is destined to achieve. It is not only an act of worship, and recognition of God, but a means of obtaining definite supplies. It is not merely that it instils a spiritual peace, and fosters the

still communion that transcends

The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,

but is the means of obtaining that regenerative power

THINGS NEW AND OLD

which creates us in righteousness and true holiness. It is the great lever of the spiritual life: nay—to speak in various figures—it is the lung by which it breathes, it is the atmosphere in which it floats, the wing by which it speeds its flight, and the language by which it daily communes with its own Original. It may be because the Christian Church does not covet spiritual favours, with the same passionate ardour as it desires the outward mercies of Providence, that its petitions sometimes turn to the latter rather than to the former. But such is the power of prayer, in bringing down from Heaven the divinest of all blessings—light, grace, love, quickening from above—filling the soul with unearthly joys, giving it inward and unutterable solace amid sorrow, conferring upon it gifts which it transcends the tongue of men or angels to describe; that we may well marvel that it is not more systematically used for these ends by Christian worshippers. And this not only in the hallowed silence of the heart's own shrine, or at the time of household worship around the domestic altar, but in the Church's social service, and its week-day hours of prayer.

Such is my belief in its power over the heart and the life, in developing all Christian graces, in strengthening faith in the Unseen, and giving us new anchorages there, in promoting a deeper piety, sanctity, and charity, in checking our worldliness, and in fostering all the virtues which this Christmas season calls us to the practice of, that I would willingly have an hour set apart for daily social prayer, by all who could assemble for the purpose within the walls of our Church. There is a touching significance in the practice adopted within other communions, of having the church-door standing always open, near the thoroughfares of city toil, into which men

THE POWER OF PRAYER

and women may retire for the purpose of devotion, if they have but a few minutes' leisure in the midst of the hurry of business. If that practice is incongruous with our habits, and if religious use and wont leads us to prefer rather to pray without ceasing in our work, that we may leaven it with the spirit of devotion, God grant that the leaven may work as beneficently without these intervals of religious quiet. Certain I am that it would work better, if we did not "forsake the assembling of ourselves together" for daily prayer. Why should it be impracticable? Would that there were even one Presbyterian Church in which it was statedly held, and wisely conducted. Few might be able to attend it, and it might degenerate into formality. But it need never do so; and were our spiritual hunger and thirst keener, were our lives more rooted in the Supernatural, our prevailing ambitions less sordid, and our love to God and man a purer and a stronger emotion, it never would do so. In addition to the Episcopalian and Roman service, we have in our midst another Church which rebukes us all, by its daily services at the very early morning and the early evening hour—before six a.m. and after six p.m.—uninterrupted the whole year round.*

Those who believe in the sacred power of prayer—not in accomplishing remote and arbitrary ends, but in strengthening and steadying our lives, in leading us away from arid questions of debate and the weary common-places of life, to "green pastures by still waters," in stimulating our too sluggish hearts to divine and unselfish service, and in casting out the grudges and rivalries that divide the Church—will understand my urgency. God

*I refer to the Catholic Apostolic Church.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

forbid that I should judge any, or blame any ; but there may be some who have never realized the value of these services. That our Christian intelligence should assume a manlier form, and our vision of God's truth be many-sided and continuously growing, is an ambition not unworthy of us ; but deeper and worthier far is the desire to reflect the spirit of our Lord, and that everything alien to the Christian character be removed far from us ; howbeit, as our Lord said, "this goeth not out but by prayer." I know of no answer which the Christian can give to those who impugn its validity half so powerful as the silent answer of his own example, if its results are seen in a life that is mellowed, restrained, and beautified by the spirit of Christ.

Now unto Him, etc.

XIII.

The Divine and the Human.

In the Book of the Prophet Hosea, chapter ²II., verse 4, it is written—"I drew them with the cords of a man, with the bands of love."

IT is unnecessary to dwell on the original application of this saying of the much-tried prophet of the decline and fall of Israel, whose words are so hard to understand, being for the most part—as the late Dean of Westminster put it—"a succession of sighs, prophetic voices from the depths of misery ; coming forth slowly, heavily, condensed, abrupt ; as though each sentence burst with a groan from his heart, and he had to take breath before he uttered the next." His whole book is like the tolling of a funeral bell. Nevertheless this sad prophet, Hosea, was one of the first in Israel to perceive, and to teach, the tenderness of divine love ; and in the book which bears his name we find a remarkable sentence, in which he alludes to the early history of the tribes of Israel, when they were brought up out of Egypt, loved as children, delivered from bondage, and drawn all unconsciously "with the cords of a man, with the bands of love." You see that the historic reference is to the deliverance of the Hebrew people from the thrall of the Egyptian oppressor and spoiler.

Now that this is a true description of one feature, or characteristic, of the Divine Nature—true everlastingly of the God whom we Christians worship—it is my aim to illustrate, and make apparent.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

It is an aspect of his nature and character, which now suffers from neglect in many quarters, partly because of the discredit into which theology has fallen in scientific circles. The truth I refer to is this. God has been for ever drawing the human race towards Himself "with the cords of a man, with the bands of love ;" and what are noblest virtues in us find in Him their highest expression, as well as their ultimate source, and supreme realisation.

Now to see the value of the recognition of this truth mark how it has fared with those of other faiths than ours, and in remoter days, to whom it has been unknown.

In all the early religions of the world we find the belief that the divine nature was, somehow, an enlarged copy of the human ; and therefore that the originals—or at least the similitudes—of the loves and hates of the human heart were to be found in the gods. In the early mythologies of Greece and Rome we find successive traces of this belief. The gods were supposed capable of appearing on earth in the likeness of men ; sharing all the passions, loves, hatreds, triumphs, and revenges of men. But gradually the loftier minds came to believe in one Presiding Power which dominated over the rest ; and, when that notion was reached, it led to the further idea of its remoteness from, and indifference to, mankind.

At first, there was the idea of the gods as supernatural and semi-aerial beings, kindred to man, interested in him, and able to interfere in his affairs ; so that they came down (as in the case of Hercules) to share the toils of men, or—like the great Twin Brethren to whom the Dorians prayed—to fight in their behalf. But, gradually, another notion took the place of this. The

THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN

idea of any sympathy in Heaven with the woes of earth was deemed unworthy of the majesty of the gods. The notion of help vouchsafed to man was supplanted by the idea that the gods of Olympus—those high superiorities—were “careless of mankind.” That was the historic sequence of thought in Greece, when a scientific conception of the Universe came to the front, and eclipsed the early religious one.

If we now turn to the Hebrew race, we find the same primitive belief, and the same gradual change, deterioration, and decline. In the early books we read of God speaking familiarly as if he were walking in a garden, or eating with one patriarch at his tent-door, or wrestling with another in his vigil. This special phase of religious apprehension gradually gave place to another; although the Palestinian people continued to believe even more intensely in the sympathy of God, realising him—under the veil of allegory—as a Father pitying his children, as their Guide in the wilderness of life, and as the good Shepherd of his sheep.

But, as time went on, and the oracles of the later prophets were all silenced, many in Israel began to think of God more as an abstract essence than a personality; and in the controversies between the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes, He was removed still further from his creatures, and thought of only as a vast creative Power; not as one who drew his creatures toward him “with the cords of a man, with the bands of love.” That led to a gradual divorce of the human heart from God, which—with all the superior enlightenment of the Hebrew race—was practically an irreligious state of the human consciousness in Palestine.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

And now, in this great crisis of affairs—when the heart of man had lost by its later thinking what it gained in earlier ages by its reverence and trust—One appeared, to fill up a blank space in the consciousness of the world, by disclosing new truths regarding the nature of God. Into the divine fatherhood—previously known—He put a fresh significance, by showing the wealth of his own affection as a son. He taught the world by the most convincing of all proofs, viz., by his own personality, not only that the Infinite can descend to the finite, but that the everlasting God loves his children, and cannot cease to love them, whatever they may do; that He sorrows over human sin, and rejoices over the return of the wanderer, and the restoration of the lost. But, He did much more than merely announce that fact as a truth. He bore the most emphatic possible witness to it, by proving its reality and significance throughout his life, and by his death.

And so one great effect, produced both by his life and his death, was this. They revealed, in an altogether new way, the divine solicitude in behalf of man. They were an evidence that, deep within the heart of the everlasting Father, there was a love which found it "more blessed to give than to receive," and rejoiced to spend itself in unwearied benefaction towards the creature. As this came out in the life of Christ, it was a love surpassing that of "friends and brethren," because it included enemies within its scope, even those who returned evil for its good. And this revealed a capacity and a tendency in God, of which the world had no imagination previously.

THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN

Mark what followed. Those who with blessed vision saw the Father in the Son, perceived in the latter a disclosure of one feature of the Infinite, which had been hid from the foundation of the world. It had been foreshadowed in primitive religion, in the rudimentary faiths of the childhood of the world; but it had been obscured by later, and wider, conceptions. And so, in order to become a power over the thought and life of the future, it had to be disclosed by a new process; viz., by a life, which revealed it absolutely. We can thus read the story of the life of Christ as the historic delineation, and proof, of a fact, to which a large part of the world had become oblivious—and a larger part had never known—viz., that the heart of God was burdened with the sorrows of humanity, and that the Infinite was for ever drawing the finite towards it “with the cords of a man, with the bands of love.”

If then, we have good ground for believing that the saddest experiences in the life of Christ—while he was burdened with human sin and sorrow—were not moments of abandonment, but instants of identification with the God whom he revealed, it follows that in his life-long self-sacrifice—revealing the eternal philanthropy of God—Christ and the Father were absolutely, fundamentally, and organically one.

Now that idea had to be transplanted from Palestine to Greece, before the heart of the Greek could feel truly, or beat rightly, toward God. It taught him that the Eternal Being was not, like the gods of Greece, remote from the world, and “careless of mankind;” nay, that for God perfect felicity was impossible if mankind was unblest, or unbefriended. It also told the Jew that the psalmists of former days had spoken truly of Jehovah as

THINGS NEW AND OLD

the "Good Shepherd," and of the people as "the sheep of his pasture" tended by his care; but it added to these old pastoral similitudes the story of a love that "gave its life for the sheep."

This idea, however, was so stupendous—and the fact so revolutionary—that it was certain in time to receive grotesque additions, especially when it appeared in strange environments. We cannot wonder that it was gradually travestied, and obscured by the very reverence of its disciples and devotees. Just as the rude peasants of Lystra, when they saw and heard Paul and Barnabas, exclaimed "the gods have come down to us in the likeness of men," so this truth was first deflected into very natural exaggerations of meaning, was then overlaid with legendary additions, and yet again twisted into manifold subtleties by the Alexandrian Jews.

It is a well-known fact that the enthusiastic welcome of a novel truth always leads to a one-sided devotion to it, by the unthinking; and the very strength with which this new idea soon laid hold of the heart of man made it most natural, and very easy, for all those who felt that their life had been renovated and uplifted, to idealise it, and to give it a hypothetical basis different from its real one. The sense of indebtedness has often been the parent of idolatry, and the very quickness of the response of the human heart to the heart of God—thus disclosed by Jesus Christ—made it possible for fancies to grow and cluster round the historical event which gave rise to that response. Whatever seemed at the moment to buttress up a truth which had given life to a dead or despairing world, was looked upon not only as legitimate, but as a sign of homage, a mark of reverence, and the symbol of indebtedness. It was most natural; and it

THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN

was an unconscious process, as true to the laws of the human mind, as it was the outcome of the age which produced it.

But the slow centuries moved on. And—when the freshness and wonder of the revelation subsided—controversies arose, in which hard and even dead formulæ took the place of the living reality ; and, as a result, the simple vital cause of all the new life of Christendom was often-times reduced to an abstraction. Its fundamental truth has sometimes seemed to die in the midst of controversy, to perish in the cold of speculation, or to be consumed in the fire of heated and acrimonious discussion. But there has been a constant resurrection of it from the dead. It has always had its Easter morning, because Christendom has not given up—and will never give up—its belief that, within the heart of the Infinite Father, there lies this principle of sacrifice, and that upon the head of that Father there rests the crown of everlasting love.

It seems very necessary now-a-days that stress should be laid upon this truth, which humanity has found to be so vital, and to which Christendom has clung so tenaciously ; because contemporary thought has become oblivious to it in many ways, and for many reasons. At times, strange currents of orthodoxy have temporarily obscured it. At others, the sacerdotal pretensions of ecclesiastics have overshadowed it. The unwarranted additions of many have overlaid it sadly. The rash curtailments of others have deprived it of its glory. The science that would rob us of the humanity of God, reducing him to a cold spectral essence—a Being who is power without affection—has taken from it what Christendom most of all reveres, and loves, and cares for. Materialism.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

if it erects an altar at all, erects it to "the unknown god;" and we are asked to find in atoms or in protoplasm the final word, which we cannot find in the intellect and heart of man; while abstract speculation tells us of an absolute, in whose image nothing is made, or can be made.

Still more significantly we have later teachers—and many highly cultured men—who speak of God as an impersonal "stream of tendency," or as a principle of reason, wisdom, power, and love, but who discern no personality behind the everlasting stream. Again He is thought of as ruling men, by those who shrink from the idea of his being disturbed by the world's sin, and moved to acutest sympathy with us under the sorrows of our lot; while He rejoices with his angels above us, when we—the sheep of his pasture—are saved from the hand of the spoiler. Many persons imagine that it derogates from the sublime repose of deity, to think of God as touched by sorrow; and that it detracts from the impartial calm of one who is at the head of the Universe that he should be much affected by the miseries, or in any wise moved by the on-goings of human life; and so, God becomes to many an abstraction, and not a person.

Now, that word "person" has often been applied to God, so as to glorify our lower rather than our higher nature. It has been so applied as to authenticate base notions of the Heavenly Father. But, allowing for this, the word itself—as applied to God—is necessary and essential. We cannot dispense with it; and, it expresses a far profounder truth than that which those who scruple to use it would put in its place. No one can by any possibility keep heavenward affections alive, if Deity be thought of only as "a stream of tendency." If we are

THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN

to draw near to God at all, the Father of our spirits whom we invoke must be a spirit like ourselves. The Lord and Master of minds must have "a mind that thinks and loves." The inspirer of persons must be himself a person.

But if we must interpret the divine nature by the human, we must surely take the highest things in man as the symbols of what is transcendent in God. We cannot possibly imagine that the creature should surpass the creator in anything. And it is surely the perfect self-abnegation which we see in Christ—his supreme self-denial, and incessant toil for others, which were the outcome of his innermost life—that is one secret of the power which he wields over the world.

If therefore in this he did not reveal an aspect or characteristic of the divine nature which is central and absolute, then the supreme moments of his life would have been moments of separation from God; and the act by which the world has been most of all subdued by him, and is most of all beholden to him, would have been acts in which he did not manifest the Father. Surely that is a moral contradiction, which proves the opposite alternative to be true.

Amongst the poems of that supreme thinker, and superlative (although at times obscure) genius of our time, Robert Browning, there is one entitled *Saul*, in which he tries to chronicle the moods of sadness, and almost of madness, in the ancient monarch of Israel, from which he was delivered by the singing and harp-playing of his young boy-attendant David. David entered the tent of the king, who was in a trance, dead to all fellowship with created things; and he played tune upon tune, the music that had power to charm bird and beast. He sang of the labours, the delights, and the sanctities of

THINGS NEW AND OLD

life; the help-tune of the reaper, the glad chaunt of the marriage, the fame of the king. Slowly, very slowly, the consciousness of the monarch returned. But the chord that was to restore him wholly, and bring him back to fellowship with his kind, had not yet been struck. Suddenly, the singer thought that in his own yearning to do all he could to help—and to bring back to consciousness—the man he loved, there was proof that He, who had done so much for man in creation, would not allow the creature to surpass him in love; and that there was much more in the heart of the Eternal, than there could ever be in his own.

I believe it; 'tis Thou God that givest; 'tis we that receive,
Would I suffer for him that I love? so would'st Thou, so wilt Thou,
So shall crown thee the topmost, ineffablest uttermost crown,
And thy love fill infinitude wholly; nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! O Saul, it shall be
A face like my face that regards thee; a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, for ever; a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!

And so—drawn you observe “with the cords of a man, with the bands of love”—Saul came back to consciousness, his life redeemed from destruction.

When David himself became king, there was brought to him one sad day the tidings “Absalom is defeated and slain;” and, in his grief, this “man after God’s own heart” cried out, “O, my son Absalom, my son, my son Absalom, would to God that I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son.”

Now, can you believe that in this terribly pathetic cry the creature outdid the Creator? and that there is no answering chord within the Divine nature, in its infinitude, to that longing? to that willingness and wish to

THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN

suffer, in order that others may not suffer? If it be so, if there is anything within the Infinite, which is at once the archetype and explanation of the lament of king David over his son Absalom—whom he had nourished, and who yet had rebelled against him—are not all the sorrows of the life of Christ made luminous? and is not the law of sacrifice by Him pre-eminently and magnificently glorified?

And did not He who, to quote another recent poet of our time, wore on Calvary "the sharp regalia of love's supremest misery," mirror to us the perfect love of God? because in him the law of sacrifice was magnified, and made honourable? Has He not drawn the world to himself "with the cords of a man, with the bands of love."

Now unto Him, etc.

XIV.

The Nature of Possession.

second
In the ~~first~~ Epistle of S. Paul to the Corinthians, chapter vi., verse 10, it is written—"Having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

THIS is one of the Christian paradoxes, which are better than the Stoic ones. You know what a paradox is. It is the exaggeration of a truth made on set purpose to bring out its hidden meaning, an apparent contradiction in terms, a statement which is false if taken literally, but is all the truer on that account if you take it figuratively or parabolically. You will remember it was said of the Founder of our Faith, "All these things spake He in parables, and without a parable spake He not unto them"; and the same apostle, who wrote the words which are now before us, said upon another occasion, "Now we see through a glass darkly." He felt that, in this world of broken knowledge and intermittent vision, we must make use of allegories and symbols—which are "figures of the true"—because we cannot at present see the truth of things "face to face."

Will you recall his complete list of these paradoxes, as they bear upon the life of that new Community, of which he was one of the illustrious leaders. He describes himself and his comrades thus: "As deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

THE NATURE OF POSSESSION

This is a different list of states, or conditions of experience, from that which he gave—in an earlier chapter of this same letter to the brotherhood at Corinth—to the effect, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed ; we are perplexed, but not in despair ; persecuted, but not forsaken ; cast down, but not destroyed.” Will you note the difference. These last are not paradoxes. They state definite facts, or achievements of religious experience ; whereas every item in the former list is an intellectual paradox ; and the last of them, “having nothing, yet possessing all things”—is the very climax, or crown, of a list of seeming contradictions.

Just glance along that great gallery of paradoxes. You will see that the truth or the falsity of each statement depends upon the point of view from which we look at it, and the way in which we construe it. One may seem to be a “deceiver,” and yet be “true” in the truest sense ; that is to say in the depths of mind, heart, and character. One may be utterly “unknown” in these interior regions, even to nearest relatives and friends?—and certainly to casual acquaintances and the mass of one’s contemporaries—“unknown” especially in the struggles that are carried on with the world, the flesh, and the devil ; and yet be “well known” to the unseen spectators of that hidden strife. Again, one may be “dying” daily to secular ideals, ambitions, or aims ; and yet “living” unto God in the invisible realm, and there endowed quite secretly with the “power of an endless life.” One may be “chastened,” and not only not “killed” by the chastisement, but be strengthened and disciplined by it ; for, as another has said, “what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not?” One may be “sorrowful,” may we not ? on the surface of experience ;

THINGS NEW AND OLD

and "yet rejoice" in the depths that lie beneath all mundane trouble. Finally, we may be poor, in the sense of "owning nothing" outwardly, and may yet "possess all things" inwardly; as the Son of Man had not where to lay his head, had neither house nor home nor lands nor patrimony, and neither crown nor sceptre; while by right divine, by primogeniture eternal, and prerogative supreme, he "possessed all things."

May we not thus break the shell of this paradox that we may find its kernel? It is significant in many ways, most of all perhaps because it gives us a key to the real nature of possession.

I therefore ask, "What is it to possess anything, to have it, and to be able to call it ours?" This seems so obvious a question, and the answer to be so easy, that it does not call for a reply. But, is it so? If you pause to reflect, you will find that it is not so simple a matter to explain what possession is, or even to understand it. What we have is always changing; whether we know it, or know it not. It is never the same to us for a year, or a month, or a day, or an hour. We think it secure, but our hold over it is most precarious. It is sometimes taken from us suddenly. How often this happens. A thing is ours to-day, and to-morrow it is gone. Money, lands, property of all kinds, health, reputation, skill, office, or employment, nay our friends (the nearest and the best of them) all depart from us in the long run, so far as externals are concerned. Many of them return to us in altered forms, transfigured and ennobled; but everything external ultimately vanishes, just as our bodies do. What then remains? I ask; and, in the same sentence, reply, that it is only character—an internal possession—that continues, consolidates, matures, refines, expands, and

THE NATURE OF POSSESSION

lasts. There it is—in that great inward sanctuary—that we can alone accumulate treasure, which (to quote an old and golden saying) “neither moth nor rust can corrupt, and which no thief can steal.”

But without looking onward to the future, I ask you to consider what it is to possess anything now and here, in the present? Pondering the subject thoughtfully, it may perhaps be found that the simplest glance, if given by an unsophisticated heart, will yield a profounder truth—and certainly one more satisfying—than the nimblest intellect, or a mind that is an adept in plummet sounding, can reach. It will be found, I think, that it is only by giving to others that we can retain anything for ourselves that is worth retention; and—what perhaps very few have fully learned—that it is in the very act of giving that we are able to retain. Once, when he was speaking at Ephesus, St. Paul asked his friends to “remember the words of the Lord Jesus how he said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” But, full of the spirit of his Master, he strikes a yet higher note, in teaching us that we must give, in order to possess, and to keep. You may remember the splendid motto which gave rise to a painting by one of the very greatest of British artists, Mr. Watts, “What I spent, I had; what I saved, I lost; what I gave, I have;” and the finished picture he named *Sic transit gloria mundi*; that is to say, thus vanishes the glory of the world. In this connection I recall the rare but magnanimous resolution of one of the richest men in the world, who is scattering his wealth in many quarters, that he ought not to die rich, but distribute his possessions in his lifetime.

And when once the true nature of ownership is grasped, what does it really matter whether we have

THINGS NEW AND OLD

much, or little of it, in the way of external possession. It is ours, in order to be given away. It is possessed, only to be parted with. Its owner is merely a trustee in behalf of others. But observe, what any one thus gives, lives on—as his or hers—in the lives and characters that are influenced, and enriched by it. Deep within them—in the very crypts of character—what the donor once possessed but parted with, continues to live. It grows, and is immortal, as the central bond uniting the generations of mankind.

To illustrate farther this saying of St. Paul, "having nothing, yet possessing all things," consider the case of an absolute owner of great landed property. Sometimes the very children of his lodge gate-keepers more truly possess the place than he does, in the sense that they profit by it, get the full benefit of it, and have happier memories of it in after years than the non-resident proprietor possibly can. Then as to books and libraries. I have known a man who owned a library of a hundred thousand volumes, yet never opened one of them. They were splendidly bound, rare editions of exceeding value ; but they were only his, for the purpose of being exhibited in show-cases to his friends. One of them permitted to read for a day or two made discoveries amongst these books, of which their legal owner was wholly ignorant. Who then was the true possessor ? The man who bought them, or the man who used them ? You will answer, while another illustration is given.

I recently went through a large picture-gallery belonging to an English nobleman. It contained some priceless treasures ; and coming to one, the painter of which I could not identify, I asked its owner who the artist was. "Oh," said he, "I cannot tell you, but I will get you a

THE NATURE OF POSSESSION

catalogue ; ” and so the inheritor of many hundred pictures by famous men actually did not know what he possessed ! and his librarian was more truly the possessor of his gallery for the time being.

This leads to another aspect of the same subject. Suppose you go with a friend to a great museum, and after seeing its treasures you remark to one of them, “ I would like to have that, just to live with.” Your friend replies, “ I would not. I admire it, but I don’t want to have it beside me always. It is for others also to see it here, to admire it, and be taught by it.” Which of you is the richer ? you, who coveted the possession of the precious thing, or your friend who did not, but was content to be educated by it, and leave it as a joy to thousands who might be similarly delighted and taught ?

And it is the same with everything else. When you see an exquisite flower in its beauty your first impulse may be to pluck it, and to wear it. A second, and a better one, will be to let it grow, that it may delight those who come after you. Enough that you have seen it once ; let others see it by and bye.

And then, do you know what it is to rejoice in what is not ours, not because it belongs to another, but because it belongs to the Infinite ? because it was brought into being by him for others of his creatures to use, to possess, and to rejoice in ; and because, when regarded in this large divine sense of ownership, every distinction and difference melts away before it, and we are all one in its blissful realisation. Surely that is an ideal that can be made real for all of us !

A sweet singer of the nineteenth century once wrote :—

If I can love without possessing, mine
Becomes the true possession.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

Note what that paradox means. You may love a thing without possessing it outwardly, and yet may have the true possession of it inwardly. Yours may be the larger wealth, the richer gain, the greater property, from the very fact that you have none of these things externally. I appeal to the past in the light of this great saying, and ask you to recall the series of witness-bearers to its historic truth.

From the sacred Founder of our most holy Religion, who was born on this earth in a stable, a son of poverty, who "had not where to lay his head," who was without fortune of any kind; and yet who possessed more within than any of the "sons of men," in the depths of consciousness and interior inscrutable alliance with the God whom He revealed, come down through the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the glorious company of the apostles, the noble army of martyrs, and the unrecorded list of those of whom the world was not worthy. They were all poor. They had nothing to speak of outwardly, yet they possessed all things inwardly. Think of the founders of the great mediæval brotherhoods—St. Francis, St. Dominic—the great preachers Chrysostom or Savonarola. What manner of men were they? They were "poor" and yet they "possessed all things." They "made many rich," because of their union with, and their hold upon, the Infinite. The grand motto of a branch of the Tennant family, *et teneo et teneor*—that is, "I hold on, and I am upheld"—was realised and exemplified in them.

You may ask in conclusion, what is the root and basis, and what the justification, of this Christian paradox? and of all the others in the list? It is this.

Those who can appropriate and venture to use them, have their life fixed in the Eternal, the Elemental, the

THE NATURE OF POSSESSION

Everlasting, the Divine. They have discovered the secret hid from generations of the worldly-wise (or foolish), that they are not their own; that they are mere units in the army of the living God, the great confederation of the everlasting Lord. It is confidence in God, thus known—while he remains sublimely and persistently unknown—that enables us to adopt, and freely continuously and gladly to use, those great Christian paradoxes of the understanding, for the guidance of the heart, and the determination of the issues of life.

If I practically “know in whom I believe,” while He remains theoretically unknown to every creature; if I can understand the language of Christ when He said “I and the Father are one, he that hath seen me hath seen the Father;” and if this was said by one whom I am encouraged to think of, and to call, an “elder brother;” then assuredly “having nothing” of the world, I may “possess all things” above it; “having nothing” for time, I may “possess all things” for eternity: and having naught to lose, I may have everything already gained. In other words, if God be within us “to will and to do of his good will,” while at the same time—to quote the words of a great modern poet—

God's great completeness flows around our incompleteness,
Round our restlessness his rest.

then, what boots it all the toil of time, the worry of events, “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune”? and what matters it, the presence or the absence of those things that used to be coveted by us in days gone by?

With the great example of our Lord and Master, with the manifold testimony of his followers for ages, we may surely lift up our hands to Heaven, and say, that “having nothing, we yet possess all things.”

Now unto Him, etc.

XV.

Some Uses of Scripture.

"Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning ; that we, through patience and comfort of the Scripture, might have hope."—Romans xv., 4.

IN this sentence we find [a principle to guide us in our study of the Scriptures, both of the Old and the New Testaments. Their main use lies in their power so to teach as to develop character in us. "Whatsoever things were written aforetime," that is to say, the whole of the Jewish Scriptures, including the Histories, the Psalms, the Prophecies (however they may have originated, and by whatsoever channel they have come down to us), have now this definite purpose to fulfil, this practical end to serve, that they contribute to our learning. They exist for the information of the present, and for the education of future ages] but with this definite end in view, that their study may develop these three things, viz., "patience, comfort, and hope." This being the design of these Scriptures, it is evident that they must be understood by us not according to their outward "letter," which this same writer elsewhere tells us "killeth," but according to their inward "spirit," which he says "giveth life."

[It is therefore of far greater importance that we should understand the scope and aim of the Scriptures, their underlying and perennial uses, than that we should succeed in reaching definite conclusions as to the date or authorship of the several Books, or even as to the interpretation of their obscurer passages. How to succeed in making a fruitful use of the Scriptures, how to

SOME USES OF SCRIPTURE

find in them counsel as to duty, guidance in difficulty, a directory for life ; that is the main point. Neither St. Paul, nor any other writer of the Sacred Books, has supplied us with reliable information as to dates and authorship. They had far more important work to do ; and they could not have anticipated the wishes, or the conclusions, of posterity on these points. But what is much better, this great writer of Epistles tells us that all that was written of old is now profitable for intellectual and moral education, for enlightenment and discipline.

Now this is a subject of great practical importance, because there is nothing more pernicious to the spirit of man than an attempt to live upon illusions. It is more than unprofitable ; it is injurious to character to go through life with loosely-formed convictions on the most momentous of subjects, clinging to beliefs that cannot be verified. In order therefore to see the abiding value of the Bible, note the want of information given by the writers of its Books about themselves, and the wonderful modesty of their claims (when they do speak of them) in comparison with what future ages have superadded. We know very little of the original writers of the Hebrew Scriptures, or of the sources of their information. In the case of comparatively few out of the sixty-six books which constitute the canon, do we know when they were written, or by whom they were composed ? But that is a matter of very secondary importance. Take the analogy of other kinds of literature. To reap the benefit of a Greek poem or dialogue, to appreciate a mediaeval story or a Scottish ballad, it is not necessary to know either who wrote them, or when they were written. In the case of the Sacred Books from Genesis to Isaiah the writers of whom we know most are Ezra and Nehemiah,

THINGS NEW AND OLD

and the authors of some of the Psalms. With regard to the later prophets, in some instances all that we know is the author's name and the name of the king in whose reign he lived.

But what is of greater importance, we are not told what the principle was upon which the Books were gathered together. We have the best of all evidence—that, viz., of results—that the Wisdom which guides men unconsciously, and shapes the destiny alike of individuals and institutions, presided over the historic growth and evolution of that Volume whose “leaves” were to be for the spiritual “healing of the nations;” but we have no knowledge of the capacity of the men upon whose responsibility the collection was first made, their power of sifting evidence and separating the spurious from the true, or of the grounds on which they admitted one book and excluded another.

Without attempting to deal with these large questions which are being discussed amongst the learned, see how the matter stands apart from such controversy. Suppose it to be proved by all the evidence available that the canon was the gradual and unconscious growth of ages of accumulation; that volume after volume was added, then altered and amended, was added to or subtracted from, as writer after writer appeared who had a message to deliver, and whose message was listened to. Slowly but surely, and progressively, whatsoever was noteworthy—or was thought to be so—would be preserved from oblivion.

More especially after the Captivity of the nation in Babylon (whence the literary era of Israel dates), on the return of the tribes from exile, the feeling of patriotism led them to collect the historic memorials of their past

SOME USES OF SCRIPTURE

existence with religious zeal. Thus the sacred literature of the Jews came to be a collection of miscellaneous documents written and copied by many hands, while they were revised and edited by many others. And this accounts for the absence of any claim put forth by the writers on their own behalf. It is certain that the authorship of some of these Books was afterwards attributed to persons who could not possibly have written them. But does that fact interfere, in the very least, with the lasting value of these great Palestinian Scriptures to posterity, and to the world at large? Literary accuracy in the determination of some of the points raised and discussed by the modern world was not possible in these earlier days; but, does that affect by one iota the imperishable worth of these Books, not only as means of enlarging and quickening the religious life of mankind, but as veritable "aids to faith" in the Unseen, the Supernatural, the Divine? Most assuredly not. It should rather enhance and deepen their value, by placing them for all time on a secure, a natural, and an historical basis.

If we wish to discover the true key to the power which the Hebrew and the Christian Scriptures now exert over mankind, the best way is to find out their imperishable uses, apart from their origin. Depend upon it, the evidence of their value is to be found in the purposes which they have accomplished, and the supreme ends to which they now contribute. For ages on ages they have been the chief religious nourishment both of Israel and of Christendom. To the Jew the Old Testament was both a religious manual, and a state directory; for to Israel Church and State were one. And the Church of the early Christian centuries looked with similar veneration to its New Testament, its Gospels and Epistles.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

Perhaps one of the best ways of finding out the attitude of the early Christians to the Scriptures is to note the plan they followed in quoting sentences from the Old Testament ; because the way in which a passage is cited from an authoritative document always casts light on the mental attitude of the writer who quotes it. Now we find that very often the Old Testament Scriptures are adopted and used "by way of accommodation," as it is called ; the words being taken as if they originally had a meaning, which is by the person quoting for the first time attached to them. For example, in the tenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul quotes a sentence from the XIX. Psalm. He asks, Have not the Jews heard the Gospel message ? And he replies, "Yes, verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." He quotes from that ancient Psalm a sentence which, as originally written, did not describe a human messenger at all, but "the Heavens declaring the glory of God, and the firmament shewing his handiwork." He uses this old sentence to express his own idea, that now the good news of the Gospel had been widely disclosed by the verbal utterances of the apostles amongst the Jews. In other words he uses it as a symbol or illustration, as if the original writer of the psalm had meant it to be thus used. And so with the verses that follow from Moses and Isaiah.

Then we sometimes find that, when a quotation is made from the Old Testament, two passages are blended together, as when our Lord, preaching in the synagogue of Capernaum, read from the prophet Isaiah, and added, "This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears." In his citation, He combined some clauses from the 58th chapter with a longer passage from the 61st, shewing

SOME USES OF SCRIPTURE

the freedom with which quotations were made, and giving us a vivid illustration of the way in which the ancient Scriptures were used and applied. The Messianic passages in the Old Testament supply another excellent illustration of the same thing, while the varying value of the translation of the ancient text further exemplifies it; but I do not enter on these matters now, because the question before us is very different.

It is not even whether we have an absolutely correct English version of the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek text, a problem on which none but critical experts can speak with authority (and as to which they differ very widely amongst themselves). What I wish to reach, and what we all need for the conduct of life, is something that is wholly unaffected by such things as differences in the translation of the text. ^{Q. See below} The question is not even whether we possess an absolutely immaculate canon, with no valuable book connected with the origin of Judaism and of Christianity omitted, and no secondary book included; for on that, too, scholars only can pronounce opinion, and upon it great scholars differ. In other words, it is not whether we have the Heavenly Treasure in earthen vessels, or even to what extent they are earthen. It is a question which lies underneath these, whatsoever the variety of the answers given to them. We find that these Books are the media of Divine Revelation, inasmuch as they awaken in us the highest, noblest thoughts of God, inasmuch as they inspire us with new feelings towards Him. They embody a Revelation because they disclose God to us with an immediacy and directness we obtain nowhere else. They convey to us the secrets of spiritual wisdom. They open

THINGS NEW AND OLD

up the windows of the supernatural. They are fountains of the living water of inspiration at which all men may drink. They are a light to our feet and a lamp to our path, and a directory for the conduct of life. Or, to change the symbol, they are a spiritual ladder by which we may ascend above the mists of the earth into a serener air, and have a clearer vision of eternal things. And so, "the wayfaring man, though a fool," may by means of them understand the revelations of character, of moral purpose, and of tendency, which these Scriptures give us. Although we cannot make use of the whole of them exactly in the same way, it is throughout much more a guide to universal conduct than the annals of a "peculiar people."

But in its historical sections, these annals of the Jewish race, are charged with lessons to us, simply as a record of how men and nations reap as they sow. We learn the laws of conduct—what it is right to do, and to avoid doing—by historic examples. Whoever wrote them, we can gather these "rules and lessons" as we read the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, the Kings, etc. Then the books of Jewish law, laid down for the guidance of the Hebrew race, have a message to posterity so far as posterity can use them fruitfully. Even ceremonial usage may carry a permanent principle within its local colouring. Then, in the poetry of the ancient Scriptures we see how great souls, ardent and reverential, breathed forth to God what they felt, their wants and sorrows, with their truest aspiration and praise. Here also local colour is intermingled with universal and abiding necessities; but that is not only no loss to posterity, but without such a transient element the record would have less charm to us now. In all the literature

SOME USES OF SCRIPTURE

of the world, whether secular or sacred, we find the union of these two features, the provincial or local, and the general or universal. And hence it follows, that we can neither apply what was relevant to a past age absolutely in the present, nor dispense with it entirely as a guide to us now. And so it comes to this.

[We are separated by many silent centuries from the experiences of Judaism, yet we are vitally related to all that nourished the life of that race, in its slow evolution; and it is ours to note how it was gradually taught, led on from the rudimentary insight of its early history to a fuller apprehension of great religious ideas, while we rejoice in the "increasing purpose" of the ages. Glance at some of the particular details. What use are we now to make of the Hebrew law of the goel (or kinsman-redeemer), of some of the laws of divorce, of the rules which led to the establishment of cities of refuge, of some of the lustral rites, and the elaborate animal sacrifices of old? These are now a series of great historical pictures preserved to us, in which we see how the race was led on from its childhood, through many stages of adolescence, to maturity in "the fulness of the times;" and so we gather the eternal out of the temporal, we see the everlasting underneath the transient.]

And when we come still farther down to the later Testament, and read of such things as "the eating of flesh offered to idols," of rules as to property, "having all things in common," and many ceremonial rites, we must observe the greatest caution; for we cannot learn our present duty from the isolated examples of the past, or from any exceptional precedent that we find in the writings handed down to us from a distant age. And

THINGS NEW AND OLD

an additional thought may confirm this, when we remember that the language, in which the records of divine wisdom and inspiration are chronicled, is at its very best an imperfect vehicle for the transmission of thought to future ages, those breathings of the Spirit which like the wind bloweth where it listeth. Now the mere fact that an inspired writer, announcing the will of God to his fellows, *must* make use of this imperfect and inadequate medium, which at the time of its first utterance is liable to so many misinterpretations, and which afterwards (when it is repeated, or translated) is liable to so many more, this fact should prevent any idolatry of the letter, and lead us from it to that eternal spirit which underlies all the forms through which inspiration may act, or in which revelation may be chronicled.

St. Paul has told us that the use of the writings of the past to himself was that he should be taught thereby. They were written for our learning or education in these different directions, that they might develop in us patience, comfort, and hope. Can we conceive any nobler results of a prolonged study of the contents of these ancient Sacred Scriptures? For thus we shall not be idolators of the book of books, or worshippers of its "letter." We shall pierce beneath the outer crust, or surface of the record, to its inner spirit; and find it as true of the Bible, as of the character of a friend, that we understand it best when we idolize it the least.

Now to God, etc.

XVI.

The Voices of the World.

In the XIV. Chapter of I. Cor., verse 10, it is written—"There are, it may be, so many kinds of Voices in the World, and none of them is without signification."

IN the writings of St. Paul we frequently meet with sentences rich in intuition, and many-sided in their wisdom, lying in the midst of abstract discussions of doctrine, or directions on the administration of their affairs to the Churches which he planted. For, although he was an expert in dialectics, he had also clear insight into those problems which lie behind the processes of reasoning. A gleam of brightest light often shoots across an abstract question he is pondering, and enlivens it with the richest poetry of truth. It is so in the sentence just read from his letter to the Church at Corinth. He was discussing an intricate and obscure question as to the "gift of tongues" and prophecy, in the attempt to unravel which even wise men have fallen into strange vagaries of interpretation. But we pause when we read that sentence, so simple, so deep, so many-sided, which pierces like a ray of sunlight through his discussion of knotty points of doctrine. "There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world; and none of them is without signification."

What are these "Voices of the World," so many, and various, and all of them significant? A "Voice" is the audible expression of something behind it; it may be a thought, or a feeling, or an act. It is a sign, and not a mere sound. It is an utterance which has intelligible

THINGS NEW AND OLD

meaning, or is the natural outlet of an emotion. And the voices of the world are either articulate, or inarticulate ; that is to say, they are either expressed in language, or are embodied in signs, which are symbolic of thought, feeling, or action. The articulate voices are the most easily understood. But, both beneath them and above them—some inferior in clearness, others superior in meaning—are the inarticulate voices of the world. The babble of infancy, the sounds of exuberant gladness in childhood, are inferior to the voices of intelligence, by which manhood and womanhood express themselves. But then, the deepest feelings of maturity, the infinite longings of the adult soul, both the joy and the sorrow of age, can find no adequate expression in words ; and an inarticulate sigh, or cry, is the only channel through which these can find expression.

We might spend time not unprofitably in merely giving a list of these voices of the world, enumerating the different kinds in their variety and manifoldness. Here are a few of them, from which we may select one or two for examination. There are the voices of Nature, sounds which are Hymns of praise, as well as notes of gladness. There are the voices of History, or of the Past ; the voices of Childhood, of bright unsophisticated spontaneous life : there are those of Age, or of mature experience. There are the voices of our Humanity, seeking after God, saying "Oh that I knew where I might find Him ;" and restless till it rests in Him. There is the voice of Doubt, or suspense of mind before the mysteries of the Universe : and there is the voice of those who have found repose, and express it audibly in praise. There are voices of sorrow, of mourning, of loss, and of resignation. There are voices of war, and voices of peace ; of life, and of death ;

THE VOICES OF THE WORLD

voices of men, and the voice of the Son of God. The list is as large and varied as the Universe is. One or two are now selected for examination.

The mind naturally turns first to the voices of Nature, which we interpret as the language of praise and worship. There is one book of ancient Scripture which is specially full of allusions to these voices, and that is the book of devotion, the liturgy of the Jewish Church. Many of the Psalms deal almost exclusively with the notes of the natural world. The psalmists devoutly heard and prized the hymn which Nature sings for ever to her Maker, that everlasting sermon on the glory of God which it preaches from day to day. The chief musician writes: "The Heavens are telling the glory of God, and the work of his hands doth the Firmament declare. Day unto day poureth forth speech, and night unto night revealeth knowledge" (then mark what follows) "There is no speech, there are no words, their voice is not heard" (it is inaudible praise), "yet through the whole earth hath their line gone forth, and to the end of the world their words." There are more than a dozen of the psalms which are nothing else than prolonged hymns of praise celebrating the voices of Nature in their tribute to God; and it is noteworthy that the writers delighted to linger over their descriptions. Even when a psalmist is going to summon the nation to its knees before God, he prefaces his call with the words, "The Lord is a great God. In his hand are the deep places of the earth, the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord our Maker." Another writes "Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; let the floods clap their hands, let the hills be joyful together;

THINGS NEW AND OLD

let the field be joyful, and all that is therein; then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice before the Lord." This praise of God is never unexpressed the wide world over, while it is understood by those who have the inward ear. None of Nature's voices are without signification. They are the voices of which our poets sing, and which our naturalists try to interpret; and in Scripture, this natural language is described as the very voice of God.

But turn from these voices of Nature and of the present, to those of History and of the past. The great events, the outstanding facts of History are a language through which God speaks audibly to men. The voice of Providence is a continuous historic one addressing the children of men, marvellous as a revelation of law, of regularity and continuity, and of order. What purpose does History subserve if it does not disclose the inflexibility of moral law? We see in the annals of our race that what men sow they reap; that if individuals, or families, or nations sow to the flesh, they reap destruction; that if they sow to the spirit, they reap life; that if they sow to the wind, they reap the whirlwind. In the great lessons of History—individual ruin following reckless conduct, domestic tragedies coming after parental neglect, a country's disaster succeeding national crimes; and, contrariwise, in the joy of well-doing, the serenity that attends all righteous action, in the peace that follows self-denial, and the success that crowns all patient industry; is it not meant that we should hear the voice of providential law, full of significance to all mankind?

And kindred to these voices of History, heard in the laws of the world with their everlasting verdicts, are the voices of individual Experience. There is a striking

THE VOICES OF THE WORLD

sentence in the thirteenth chapter of the prophet Isaiah, in which he says that after the bread of adversity had been eaten, and the water of affliction drunk, those who had experienced these things would hear a voice behind them saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it." What voice was that? It was the voice of past experience. Out of sorrow and disaster, those who had suffered, broken down, or gone astray, would hear a voice behind them, one of encouragement and direction, and therefore of hope. The winds of memory might murmur of failure, but they would also bring a message of good cheer, for they would indicate the right way for the future journey of life. A new voice would say, "This is the way, walk ye in it."

Then, there are the voices of Age, of mature experience, which speak with authority to the inexperienced who are venturesome, and fond of novelty. The generation about to pass away bequeaths its experience to the generation that is growing up; and, although the aged are apt to be impatient of novel voices, and are prone to impose their old ideas on the young, it is equally true that the latter are very apt to neglect, if not to despise, the wisdom of the past. We should all remember that we are treading paths which our fathers trod before us, and that there is little that is new under the sun, that the thing that hath been will be again, and that which is to be hath already been. While human history never repeats itself, many a disaster would be spared, and many a folly averted, if youth would always attend respectfully to the lessons of age, while it does not adopt them mechanically or follow them slavishly.

Then, the voices of Childhood; have they not also a lesson for all of us, and a peculiar significance for age?

THINGS NEW AND OLD

In the innocent gladness of unsophisticated childhood, and in the manifold joys of youth, there is a language through which God speaks to the men and women of the world. By the unassumingness, the unsuspectingness, the unworldliness of children, by their trust and their docility, their openness to new impressions, our rigid, stereotyped and often querulous age is taught the lessons it most needs; and we must remember who it was who selected childlikeness as the quality necessary for admission into his kingdom. Our Master, Teacher, and Lord, addressing grown men and women, took a young child for his text, and said, "Except ye become as little children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of Heaven."

Then, there is the voice of our Humanity, perplexed and burdened, seeking after God, and restless till it rests in Him. The seekers after God have lifted up their voice in many broken languages. And although He is not remote from any one of us, or hard to find by those who seek Him guilelessly, many start along false tracks, and journey aimlessly for long; and the voice of doubt and perplexity, of wandering spirits seeking rest, is full of significance to those to whom anxiety and travail are unknown. As one poet says,

If anchored spirits in their blythest motion,
Dip to their anchors veiled within the ocean,

they should remember that another poet has written,

There lives more faith in honest doubt,
Believe me, than in half the creeds,

and listen in deepest sympathy to the voices of those who cry in the wilderness, longing for the light. On the other hand, those who have not found anchorage, but are still "the pilgrims of the Infinite," should listen to the

THE VOICES OF THE WORLD

voices of faith, hope, and love, which are so full of significance to those outside the Christian Commonwealth. The voice of the Church Catholic is a voice which calls to every seeker after truth and light. The consenting testimony of the Christian ages demands, and has a right to demand, respectful listening. Is it a slight thing, is it a trivial circumstance, that more than sixty generations of Christendom have, with one accord, amid all their differences, found a solution of the great world-problem, an answer to the questions of the ages, at one Centre? and a cure for the diseases of Man's spirit in one and the same Personality? To all bereft of faith that fact is full of significance, because it is the consenting voice of their brother-men who have found repose, and who for nineteen centuries, in the hymns of Christendom, have been singing of it and celebrating it, with the utmost fervours of devotion.

Then there is the voice of Sorrow, and the voices of Death and the Grave, which speak to us all in so many ways. They are kindly, friendly voices; but I shall not linger over them. Think lastly, as we Christians should, of that Voice which gives its chief significance to all the rest. It is the voice of the Son of Man, the Saviour and the friend of men, the good shepherd of humanity. "My sheep," said He, "hear my voice"; and they follow Him "because they know his voice." "Every one that is of the truth," He said, "heareth my voice." And it is so very varied, so expressive and tender in its appeals, that it was likened in the Apocalypse to "the sound of many waters." Note the authority with which He addresses the world in that sentence, "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." There is no misunderstanding, and there can be no minimizing of that saying, no evasion

THINGS NEW AND OLD

of its force. If we are of the truth, we will enter into his school, we will sit at his feet, we will listen to his voice ; and, what is more, hearing it, we will obey it.

In conclusion, let us see that we do not miss any of these voices of the world, daily and hourly appealing to us ; for, if we do, we shall certainly suffer loss. And see that we understand them aright. St. Paul wrote, "If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me." In order to understand any of them aright we must be in sympathy with them, and in sympathy with the speaker. Whether we put the same interpretation upon them as others do, let us be sure that we get their message to us, for it varies with the individual. Each voice of the world, of Nature, of History, of Experience, of Age, of Childhood, of Doubt, of Faith, of Sorrow, of Death, and that of the Divine Teacher of mankind, comes charged with a message to the listener. "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear." Let him "be swift to hear," swift also to obey ; for surely we may apply to our treatment of these voices—which are God's varied language to us all, the dialect in which He addresses us—what Christ said of his own words. "He that heareth them, and doeth them not, I judge him not ; but the word which I have spoken " (these voices we have heard) "the same shall judge him at the last."

Now to God, etc.

XVII.

The Glory of the Lord.

In Psalm civ., 31, it is written—"The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever. The Lord shall rejoice in his works."

IN the light of this sentence we may ask the secret of that power which Nature exerts over the soul of man, when we are in the presence of what is either beautiful, grand, or sublime ; for it sometimes escapes us, although it is an "open secret." Those who live in town or city, but leave them for a time to breathe a more exhilarating air, are thereby brought into closer contact with Nature, and become aware of the inexhaustible fulness of her life, whether they are by the sea, or in inland vales, or amid the mountains. And there are times when, to all of us, whether in the city or out of it, the common face of Nature is transfigured. There are days of peculiar splendour, mornings of rare magnificence, evenings of surpassing loveliness, when the voices of the world are clearer and more intelligible. They become almost articulate ; while the undying spirit of Nature seems to be disclosing itself to all who have eyes to see, and ears to hear, or hearts to apprehend. These are times of actual revelation ; and, while they last, every appreciative mind feels how much better it is to be in immediate contact with Nature, than to be poring over the dead memorials of it, as these are recorded in books of verse or prose. Books are good teachers, and friends that do not disappoint us ; but Nature is often a better teacher than the folios are, and to the hearts of her

THINGS NEW AND OLD

docile pupils she is the most benign instructress. When her vital splendour is disclosed; and we, "beholding as in a glass," can interpret it as "the glory of God," we feel how true are the poet's words,

One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach us more of man,
Of moral evil and of good
Than all the sages can.

But these visions are only now and then beheld by us. Like every other apocalypse, the glory of the outer world is fugitive. Were it permanent, it would become commonplace. And after having witnessed some unfolding of it, which has made not only the external world but human nature seem more divine, the splendour is withdrawn, the sky resumes its sober colouring and the earth its sombre hue, while we return to the ordinary tasks of everyday experience.

It will profit us, however, to ask what is the secret of the power which Nature exerts over us at these moments of apocalypse, and what is the undying charm with which she holds us fast? And if we search through the whole literature of antiquity, it will be difficult to find a nobler description of the glory of Nature than the hundred and fourth in the Hebrew Psalter, from which the text is taken. It is one of those religious odes, the edge of which a thousand repetitions cannot dull; and which, when either read or listened to, seldom fails to stir the devout spirit to its inmost depths. It was the naturalist Humboldt, I think, who said that in this psalm we have an outline or epitome of the whole of the cosmos; and that the movements of the entire universe, animate and inanimate, in heaven and in earth, are sketched for us in a few bold strokes.

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Its central thought is the Divine efficiency, as seen in all the ongoings of physical Nature, in the ceaseless ebb and flow of life, and the multitudinous forces of the world; the everlasting motions disclosing an eternal Mover, the incessant work revealing a Worker that is never weary. In the changes which succeed each other without a pause in the realm of Nature, the author of this hymn sees God "renewing the face of the earth." All physical life he regards as his gift, and its maintenance as his work, quite as much as our mental and spiritual life is. The whole universe, in its prolonged evolution, dependent on One who lives not beyond it, seated on some aerial, imaginary throne, but who dwells within it, as its essential substance, disclosing Himself in all that comes to pass, and manifesting his glory in every pulse of its life. We need not follow every stage of the writer's thought, as he takes an inventory of the things which appealed most vividly to him; but note three things regarding the psalm as a whole.

I. Its keynote, how it opens by calling upon the soul of man to praise the living Spirit of the Universe. The mind of the poet is on fire. He is going to write a hymn on the Creation, and he begins "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, Thou art very great, Thou art clothed with honour and majesty." The spectacle of Nature which has passed before his mind's eye, its moving forms and changing forces, he interprets as the moving energy, the transfiguring work of the indwelling Deity. II. Having found in it the indwelling God, he rests in the contemplation of Nature. Hence, there is a singular calmness in this hymn. There is not only no separation of the life of the world from the life of God, but there is no separation of the past from

THINGS NEW AND OLD

the present; as if creation had been an act, or drama, accomplished long ago, instead of a process incessant and continuous still. Everywhere he sees the working of omnipotence, wisdom, and love, in all that comes to pass; all existence waiting upon God, by his life upheld, and by his spirit renewed. He considers the clouds as God's chariots, for He rides on the wings of the wind. The light of the morning is the robe of the Infinite, the "garment we see Him by." The springs amongst the hills ascending from unknown depths are the wells of God, from which streams issue forth, at which the wild ass of the wilderness quenches its thirst. Along these water-courses trees arise, and there the birds build their nests, and make the valleys vocal with song. The mountains, too, have their wild creatures, that delight in the free life of these glorious solitudes. The young lions roar by night, and seek their meat from God. By day and in darkness alike are the signs of divine watchfulness, and the superintendence of the world. On the earth, and in the waters, it is the same; from leviathan in the great and wide sea, to the shoals of lesser fish in quiet bays. Then the psalmist sees in imagination man toiling in the fields, labouring at agricultural and pastoral work, or guiding his ships upon the ocean, and subduing Nature to his uses; and he exclaims, in an ecstasy of enthusiasm, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works. In wisdom hast thou made them all. The earth is full of thy riches." Then, III., after a farther enumeration of particulars, his spirit rises from the survey, in fine poetic rapture, to a still loftier outburst: "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever. The Lord shall rejoice in his works." All this, which has been passing as a panoramic vision before his inward eye, is one revolving

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

picture of the glory of God, divided into parts to the eye of the contemplator, but one in reality, one in essence.

And it is all the apocalypse of a glory that shall last for ever, "while sun and moon endure," and longer; for, when they perish, it remains indestructible. And so he says "As for me I shall sing praise to this God as long as I live. I shall play on the stringed instruments to my God while I have my being. My meditation of Him shall be sweet." He will continue to think of this glory with ever fresh delight, resting in the joy it brings to him.

So much for the thought embodied in this psalm.

Now when we have any experience similar to this, and wish to discover the source of the fascination which Nature exerts over us, to soothe, delight, and strengthen, we may find an answer by some such process as this. We know that there are times when we are not soothed or taught by it, nor helped nor strengthened any way. We may be in the presence of the very grandest natural phenomena, but they do not appeal to us. They have no message for us. How is it? Is it due to pre-occupation of mind, to some hindrance which we bring with us? or is it because we at times project our moods of sadness or of misgiving into Nature, seeing in the storm-wind the reflex of our grief, and in the waves breaking on the "cold grey stones" the moanings of our melancholy, in some cry of Nature an echo of our misdeeds, or in the thunder a note of vengeance? If we do not thus bring a morbid spirit with us into our fellowship with Nature, we may be so self-engrossed that we have no eye to see what is visible, and no ear to hear what is audible; in short, we have not "a heart at leisure from itself" to

THINGS NEW AND OLD

learn and to appreciate. We have not that "wise passiveness" of which a poet speaks, without which no revelation is ever made to man.

Or again, we may have the wish to see beyond appearances into the hidden life of things, but owing to some theory of the Universe which we may have adopted, the phenomena of Nature are an inscrutable maze, a succession of appearances and disappearances, of the origin and destiny of which we think nothing can be known. They seem the outcome of a blind protean force, the changes of a kaleidoscope that is endlessly turning round and round. I do not say that when this is our point of view we can never receive the sweet influence of the external world, or be blessed by its tranquility in the midst of our unrest; for bountiful Nature often blesses us when we are least prepared for her benediction. But, if we see no divine meaning in Nature, and cannot interpret its forces as the revelation of the indwelling God, we not only miss the intellectual message with which it is charged; but we also fail to apprehend the peace, the strong and self-sufficing joy, which it has power to bestow on us.

This, then, is the first element in the influence which Nature exerts over the heart of man, and the teaching which it gives, when it is reverentially approached. It not only shows us incessant change (with a wondrous charm at the very heart of its changefulness), but it also discloses that which endures amid the vicissitude of things. It reveals what is stable in the midst of instability, and what rests encircled by agitation. And now we put the question what is it that thus endures, and always has endured, whatever alterations happen within the elements or atoms and ongoings of the Universe?

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

What is it but the Glory that lives, and has its being, in the very heart of the things that change and fluctuate or die? You gaze upon the face of Nature. You perceive the changes that occur. But you are aware that one vast spiritual life is everywhere at work among the agencies around you, subdivided in each of them, greater than any one of them, but one and the same in all of them. You may be quite unable to grasp it as a whole; but, while you are in fellowship with any one form in which it is disclosed—while, for example, you are pondering the beauty of a single flower or a separate cloud, or a mountain range, or a solitary star, you are having true fellowship with the everlasting Presence which these reveal. If to understand even afar off the meaning of the laws of Nature is to have a real community of thought with the Lawgiver, then to feel a pure and passionless delight in the loveliness of the world is to have fellowship unconsciously with God. There may be a real adoration of the Infinite, though the praise of the heart is silent. In other words, we may hold fellowship with Heaven all the year, and, as the poet puts it,

Worship at the temple's inner shrine,

God being with us when we know it not;

for, if "we are his offspring," there is a community of nature between the Creator and the creature that is often unconscious to the latter: and "worship of the silent sort" is often more genuine than "much speaking" by the voice.

It is true that the loftiest fellowship of the spirit always assumes a conscious form, but we must remember—and there is much that leads us to forget it—that, as the Presence "which besets us before and behind" is ultimately incomprehensible, our communion with it must

THINGS NEW AND OLD

always have its mysterious and shadowy side. It can never be embraced by the intellect in its entirety. Apprehended, it is never comprehended ; and we human worshippers often run the risk of substituting a poor circumscribed notion of the Infinite, gathered from our own limitations, for the glory that is impersonal, and the order that is superhuman ; quite as truly as we incur the counter-risk of missing the personal altogether in the haze of the infinite. And then, we must remember with delight, that one of the avenues by which we approach the divine Temple is entered " by the gate called Beautiful " ; and that the intuition of the soul, by which the beauty of the universe is discerned, is one of the channels along which the current of divine inspiration flows. It is not only that we include our insight into the meaning of Nature amongst the good gifts which descend to us from above, but also that by that insight itself we are enabled to behold one phase of the glory of God, and by the exercise of that faculty to have fellowship with the Eternal.

We cannot lay too great a stress upon the personal side of the Divine nature, that feature of it which we can legitimately speak of in the terms which our own humanity supplies ; but we must as carefully guard against thinking of God merely as an infinite human being, an enlarged copy of the human. In other words, we must add to the notion of his personality that of an impersonal glory, of an indefinite splendour to which we can affix no human attribute or name. It must be familiar to all of us that we have often to correct our notions of the Divine Nature and operations, gathered from one field of speculation, by noting its hints and intimations as they are disclosed in others ; and most assuredly the nature of God is as truly disclosed to us in the unwearied

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

life, the movements, and the glory of the Universe which we cannot call human ; as it is in the wisdom, the tenderness, the grace, and the affection that are properly our own. Nay more, I think that it is a frequent source of error and ultimate injury to worshippers, if their habitual and dominant idea of God is that of an infinite-Potentate seated on a throne with whom we can carry on conversations and conferences in secret. Most of the heresies (so-called) of the Church, and many of its schisms, have sprung from this root.

There are times, of course, when the realisation of a Divine Presence in Nature beyond us is much more vivid than at others. But, when its presence is beheld and felt, the material elements, that usually obtrude and press upon the senses, fade away from view, and the spiritual alone is realised. As Wordsworth says,

The gross and visible form of things
Relinquishes its hold upon the sense,
Yea, almost on the mind itself, and seems
All unsubstantialized.

Thus, on high mountain solitudes, or by the shore of the ever-restless sea, or at night under the arching dome of the Heavens (though it is through the senses that the tidings are borne to us) the senses are spiritualised by the vision we obtain, and we escape into the clearer air of thought and mystic fellowship.

No one has written more profoundly or religiously on this subject than Wordsworth has done, who was beyond all question the deepest interpreter of the meaning of Nature that the literature of the world had produced : and from him I quote two passages which can scarcely be read too often. He is describing the vision to

THINGS NEW AND OLD

the eye and soul of a youth, when he "beheld the sun rise up and bathe the world in light."

He looked.

Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth,
And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
Beneath him. Far and wide the clouds were touched,
And in their silent forces he could read
Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
The spectacle; sensation, soul, and form,
All melted into him; they swallowed up
His animal being; in them did he live,
And by them did he live; they were his life.
In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request
Wrapt into still communion that transcends
The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
His mind was a thanksgiving to the power
That made him; it was blessedness and love.

Now such an experience was the truest and purest
worship; intense, spontaneous, ecstatic, self-forgetful.
But what was its source? What evoked it? It was the
perception of God in Nature, the recognition of the
Eternal Presence; living, moving, abiding in creation,
and rejoicing in it everlastingly. Again he wrote,

I have seen

A curious child, who dwelt upon a tract
Of inland ground, applying to his ear
The convolutions of a smooth-lipped shell;
To which, in silence hushed, his very soul
Listened intensely; and his countenance soon

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Brightened with joy ; for from within was heard
Murmurings, whereby the monitor expressed
Mysterious union with its native sea.
Even such a shell the Universe itself
Is to the ear of Faith ; and there are times,
I doubt not, when to you it doth impart
Authentic tidings of invisible things ;
Of ebb, and flow, and ever-during power,
And central peace, subsisting at the heart
Of endless agitation. Here you stand,
Adore, and worship, when you know it not ;
Pious beyond the intention of your thought ;
Devout above the meaning of your will.

Thus the Universe speaks to us of the indwelling God, detached from Nature, yet inseparable from it, its alpha and omega, the spring of all its movements ; and it is the conviction that this shall endure for ever, an imperishable feature of the cosmos, an indestructible element in Nature, that is the source of its undying charm, and one secret of the influence it wields over the heart of man.

But a farther idea is embodied in the second clause of the sentence taken from the Hebrew psalm. "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever. The Lord shall rejoice in his works." The idea here is that the Divine Creator and Artist rejoices in the evolving processes at work, the ever-renovating forces that are busy throughout his Universe without a pause. We are thrilled by Nature because, as we have seen, we discern in it the glory of the Infinite : but the real secret of our delight is our unity of feeling, for the time being, with that Supreme Life that is for ever "renewing the face of the earth."

THINGS NEW AND OLD

If we may without presumption try to enter however remotely into the divine procedure, consider how the omnipresent Worker must delight in the mere development of his own creative activity, how the entire evolution of the cosmos must be a source of joy to the Being from whom the process emanates; a process (like Himself the Producer) "without beginning of days, or end of time." Realise the lavish way in which Beauty, glorious, many-sided, ineffable, is spread throughout the entire cosmos, and—to the casual observer—is wasted. In thousands of places it is seen by no human eye, appreciated by no human mind or heart. For what purpose then does it exist? Surely we do not err in concluding that it is that its Creator may rejoice in the work of his hands; and that from the tiniest flower in the uplands to the glorious majesty of the storm, or the fierce splendour of the light that no human eye can tolerate, all exists that He may have joy in that which He hath made and upholds. And when we realise that the Being who is in the clouds and mountains, in the grass and flowers, as well as in the mind and heart of man rejoices in his works, the radiant gladness which He has diffused throughout Nature must call forth a corresponding gladness in us who contemplate it. When we realise that the Being (again to quote from Nature's greatest poet)

Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man,
A motion and a spirit that impells
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things,

is a great personality, whose joy is reflected to us in the brightness of Nature, we ourselves may surely participate

THE GLORY OF THE LORD

in the joy. The quiet of Nature, the "silence and the calm" of her "mute insensate things," the soothing peace that she breathes forth from her flowers and sunsets, has a mysterious power to allay the unrest of our most perturbed hours, our moods of passion and excitement, of restlessness and disappointment. And when Nature sends "her own deep quiet to restore our hearts," it fulfils its most friendly office to man. It virtually asks us to receive in a "wise passiveness" what no activity or energy of mind can win for us.

And it has another function equally benign. Its office is to guard those who are in daily contact with the meanesses and pettinesses of human life, from the risk of infection which these things always induce. It appeals to those who are exposed to rufflings of temper from the frowardness of men, and from the disappointments or illusions of life. It has a message for those who are apt to chafe under the burdens laid upon them in the struggle for existence. The beauty, the splendour, the calm, and the mysterious glory of the world, which we are permitted to interpret as the signs of rejoicing by the Creator in the work of his hands, this—flashing in upon us from myriad points in the outward world—brings with it a "healing power" to those who suffer in any of the ways just mentioned.

If we cannot rest calmly, as the Hebrew psalmist did, and as our Saviour bid us do, in the contemplation of Nature, it is because we are either worldly, or morbid. The voices of Nature are meant to tranquilise the mind, to calm the heart, and to restore the soul, simply because they are divine. Let us therefore see in Nature a revelation of the glory of God, of whom, through whom, and to whom, are all things.

Now to Him, etc.

XVIII.

Treasures that Endure.

In the Gospel of St. Matthew, vi., 20, it is written—"Lay up for yourselves treasures which neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal."

HERE is an antidote to that which so often withers the heart of man, and lays waste its powers. The Sermon on the Mount is not, as has often been said, a series of negative precepts like the Decalogue of the Jews, directions for the restraint of human nature, and the control of its at times rebellious instincts. It is a set of rules for the guidance of these instincts, a series of divine aphorisms as to duty, a directory for practical conduct; the ultimate end sought being the full and free development of human nature, by freeing it from the fetters which impede its life, quickening it in a many-sided harmonious activity. It is true that in this discourse we find many cautions against imperfect or false ideals of life, and distorted types of piety; but its prevailing drift is strongly positive. Here and there we have the negative and positive presented in succession. For example, we are told "When thou prayest thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are." We are cautioned against "vain repetitions," and "much speaking." But it is added that we are to "pray in secret," and say "Our Father, etc." And so, in the passage before us, the counsel is, lay not up for yourselves treasures that are fleeting, but those that endure.

Now, this advice contains a hidden world of wisdom, wrapped up in its simplicity, and concealed within its

TREASURES THAT ENDURE

obviousness. No doubt the primary or surface caution is directed against the avaricious pursuit of wealth, and the hoarding of earthly treasure, in which worldliness commonly consists. But the advice penetrates much deeper down into human nature than this. It also rises far above the maxims of the Stoical Philosophy, as to contempt of the world, and superiority to its bribes. If we construe it, not in the spirit of "the letter which killeth, but of the spirit which giveth life," it will be found to be one of the richest sentences of Scripture.

There are some prosaic people who interpret the precepts of Christ as to property, just as they construe his admonitions against revenge, in a hard and sordid realism. They think that, as Jesus told his disciples to turn the left cheek to those who smote the right, and to let the man who stole a coat have a cloak also, he forbade his disciples to amass property of any kind, and frowned upon the acquisition of wealth. It is scarcely necessary to spend time in showing that such was not the attitude or teaching of Christ; while it is as easy, as it is superfluous, to show that accumulations of wealth have been of incalculable benefit to the race at large, opening up new channels of beneficent enterprise; and, by multiplying his resources, ministering to the wants, and promoting the welfare of man. Accumulations of wealth are the inevitable result of competitive industry, and honourable toil; while its pursuit has been the parent of many of the virtues, and the nurse of others, such as thrift, perseverance, patience, labouring to the end; and no Religion which opposed these things could ever survive in the struggle for existence, or secure the permanent homage of mankind.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

It is true that our Lord Himself was poor, and that He divinely chose a life of poverty in preference to one of affluence. It is well that the rich should remember this fact, and should also recollect that He preached his gospel to the poor, while He found those who were unburdened by riches more open to the influence of his spiritual teaching. He gives us no admonitions as to the evils of poverty. There was little need of such advice in his day, or perhaps at any time ; but He warned his followers against the seductions of wealth. He said it was as difficult for a rich man to enter into his kingdom, as it was for a camel to pass through the needle's eye. But all this was in the allegoric style of the spiritual seer, who uses a graphic image to convey truth to unreceptive natures : and He immediately interpreted his language of figure and symbol by adding, "How hardly shall they that trust in riches enter into the kingdom"? His disciples were almost all poor men. His seventy heralds were sent forth to labour without purse or script : but, with a life of hardship and trial before them, it was not only needful, but most kindly planned. The struggle with opposing forces, inseparable from the rise of a Religion destined to supplant the old customs of hereditary usage, made a life of poverty by far the best for the earliest disciples. But Christ had also a few rich followers ; and He never asked Zacheus to part with his wealth, or Nicodemus to take a vow of poverty. There were rich women also, who ministered to Him of their substance, Susannah, the wife of Herod's steward, and others.

What happened was this. Christ divinely set in motion great spiritual forces of a new order. When these took possession of the hearts, and came to dominate the lives

TREASURES THAT ENDURE

of his followers, it led them spontaneously to give up much of what they possessed, to adopt their Master's style of life, discovering that "it was more blessed to give than to receive, better to minister than to be ministered unto, better to forget themselves than to put themselves forward, better at times to be last than to be first."

Perhaps, of all the charges brought against our Lord, the most baseless is that of wishing all men to become poor, and thus levelling society down to an unnatural equality. No opponent ventured to adduce that charge during his lifetime, and they were lynx-eyed in detecting imaginary faults, and acute enough in inventing false ones. He made no attack on property or capital, on the instinct of saving and accumulating possessions. What He opposed, and required his disciples to renounce, was the love of the world and the things of the world, when these so magnetised the spirit of man that they kept it fixed on things transient. When He said "Lay not up treasure on earth" He was merely repeating, with new emphasis, the Psalmist's words, "If riches increase, set not your heart upon them." He virtually said this, "Remember that acquisition of that sort is not the end of human life, nor its enjoyment the goal of your existence. These transient things cannot satisfy the immortal part of you. At their very best they are but the symbols of true and abiding riches, all of which must be stored in the granary within you, whence they can never be removed."

You thus see that in this precept of our Lord there is, on the one hand, no antagonism to the world; and, on the other, no tirade against worldliness. This was this speciality in his way of meeting the secular spirit, viz.: there was no denunciation of that which has a natural

THINGS NEW AND OLD

charm for every healthy human spirit, viz., success in life; but the fascination of the world—which may so easily enslave those who find pleasure in it—is met by an exhibition of what transcends everything that is cosmic, is intrinsically superior to it, and which therefore outlasts it. We are given a new object of interest and attractiveness to arrest us, to excite our ambition, and fire our enthusiasm; an object of which our secular success at its highest is a mere symbol. In other words, in reference to earthly good our blessed Lord does not say “Despise it, trample on the instinct that leads you to value it, mortify the desire for its accumulation”; but He gives both the instinct and the desire a fresh direction, and to the passion a new object.

But the reason why our earthly good should not be so passionately pursued as it is by most of us, is that “moth and rust can corrupt it,” and that “thieves can steal it” from us. That is to say it is both perishable and precarious. It does not follow that all perishable things are to be despised. Quite the contrary. They are to be rejoiced in while they are ours, fully appreciated while they last, and their gains are then to be secured; for if they were always at hand, and available at any time, they could not have the charm that they have as transient blessings of the day or the hour.

The sense of this transitoriness is, however, sometimes disturbing. Not only do all our earthly possessions—every one of them—pass in time to other owners; but an element of decay is in them, even while we are using them. And they may all suddenly depart from us. Health, riches, friends, relatives, associates, fellow-workers, comrades, may all be taken from us. So true it is that “the things which are seen are temporal.”

TREASURES THAT ENDURE

But is not that fact meant to emphasise the counter-truth that "the things which are not seen are eternal," and that these can be taken with us wherever we go, to enrich us in whatsoever region of the Universe we enter or explore?

Note also that the "Heaven" referred to in this text, as that in which our treasure is stored, is not a distant realm to be entered in the future. It is the "present Heaven" of the heart. Divine storage is all within. It is realised and known, in the consolidation of character, in the ripening of all the higher graces, refinements, noblenesses, charities, and beneficent activities of our nature. Our "present Heaven" is the sunshine of all the human virtues, the blossoming of faith, hope, and love, the growth of insight, sympathy, and graciousness. Well then: with all our getting, let us get this portable wealth; let it be the ambition, the very passion, of our lives to amass it.

Now to God, etc.

XVIV.

The Ten Commandments.

In the *cxix.* Psalm, verse 96, it is written—"I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad, or (as it is in another version), "I have seen that all things come to an end, but thy commandment is exceedingly broad."

WITH this sentence guiding us, I shall say something on the practical use of those Ten Commandments, which have a place not only in the Scriptures of the Old Testament, but in the Communion Service of the Christian Church; in order to show how we may use them more profitably than we often do.

I daresay that some, who have been baptised into the Christian Church, miss the lessons with which they are charged, because they suppose them to be superseded—for Christendom at least—by our Lord's statement, when He summed up the whole Law in the two Commandments of Love to God and Love to Man. Others find that they cannot use them profitably because of their Jewish phraseology about worshipping graven images, and coveting one's neighbour's ox or his ass, because these are not temptations to which they are particularly prone. But, since these ten commandments are included within the Divine Writings which are the text-book of Christendom, and as their place cannot be taken by any other summary of the Law, it may be useful to see what underlies them, and what can be brought out of them for the modern world, as a help to it in the practice of Religion.

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

Many persons are in the habit of taking them too literally, and interpreting them too rigidly, "according to the letter which killeth, and not the spirit which giveth life." For example, they confine the third commandment to profane swearing, the sixth to the actual murder of fellow-creatures, the eighth to theft of property, the ninth to perjury in the witness-box; and so, as Jewish commandments, they may have only a partial relevancy to us. But we may discover their "exceeding breadth," and their applicability to the details of modern life, by ascertaining their range and scope as originally laid down, with the immense number of cases which they included then and cover now.

I.—"God spake these words, and said, I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other Gods but me." This first commandment was directed against polytheism, which had been superseded very early in the history of Israel by the revelation of the unity of God. Now, we are not much exposed to such polytheism as this commandment was directed against; yet we constantly lapse into moods in which we recognize—and rightly recognize—a multitude of powers around us, forces, energies, spirits, etc., to which both the scientific and the poetic study of Nature leads. And the special point of this first commandment to the modern world—whether it addresses the scientific, or poetic, or merely practical mind—is this; that when we worship, we must realize the unity of God, behind all multiplicity and difference. Whatever we may do at other times, and in other moods, recognizing that the Universe is pervaded by many powers, and is developing many processes, when we "worship and fall down, and kneel before" the Infinite, our thoughts must not be of the many, but of the One, of

THINGS NEW AND OLD

that One who is the fountain-head of Being, the archetype behind all types, the Power within all force, the "master-light of all our seeing." Thought and feeling must be concentrated, must come to a focus, and that focus the infinite Personality of Him "in whom we live and move and have our being." Whenever this commandment is pronounced in our hearing it is our privilege to fill up the meaning of the words, and to realize the attributes of the God whom we adore by adding every conceivable or possible excellence, magnified to infinity ; while at the same time we realize that we are his offspring.

There is a good deal of idolatry lingering in the modern world, and it often assumes curious phases. It exists in many who are ignorant of its presence, because some persons unconsciously idolize their wealth, others their profession, some their ancestry, a few their daily work, and very many their amusements. They "make unto themselves a God" of the thing that takes up most of their time and thought. If we are to escape from it, from the idolatry which prostrates itself before the objects of our ambition, the Christian world must remember, and must obey, this first commandment of the Hebrew decalogue, "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other Gods but me."

II.—When the second commandment—directed against the worship of graven images, or the likeness of the Unseen—is read in our hearing, we should think not so much of its negations, as of the positive truths which underlie its prohibitions. "Thou shalt not" always implies a "Thou shalt," and since it has been foolishly advanced as a charge against the decalogue that it is only, or mainly, a series of prohibitions, while our life cannot be nourished by negations, it is wise in every case to get to

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

the positive element which each commandment involves. In this one the main point is that we should turn from symbols to that which they symbolize, from imagery and representation, from pictures which are only "figures of the true," to reality itself. We are not now exposed to the temptations of actually worshipping "graven images," the "works of art and man's device," but we are all prone to take shadows for substances, to mistake illusion for reality; and I think that, if we take this commandment as a counsel against such a tendency, we will find it immeasurably helpful to our life in these modern days.

III.—In the third commandment we are warned "not to take the name of the Lord our God in vain." It used to be regarded mainly as a caution against the habit of profane swearing, when it was an extremely common fault; but this tendency is not so common in the civilized communities of Christendom as it used to be in earlier days, and the precept is much wider and fuller. We must remember that the name of God stands as the symbol of his nature, and that if we are irreverent to the former, we cannot be reverent to the latter. Therefore we may take this third commandment as one that inculcates reverence for the Divine Nature, as it is disclosed to man through all those names which describe, define, suggest, or characterize it. Recall some of them, which have come down to us consecrated by historic use and wont, from the very beginning of the Jewish race: King, Judge, Shepherd, Guide, Friend, Father. These are personal and human; but there are others, used by psalmists and seers, which are impersonal; such as House, House of Defence, Strong Rock, Castle, Help, Hope, Refuge, etc.; each of these bringing out some phase or aspect of the Divine Nature, which in its infinitude

THINGS NEW AND OLD

transcends them all. You at once see the "breadth of the commandment," which ordains that we should honour these names, as revelations of the Infinite to the finite, and use them with habitual reverence as sacred reflections of it.

IV.—The fourth commandment has reference to the Day of Rest, occurring once in seven ; a day in which our ordinary toil is to a large extent suspended, and other work engaged in, a holiday which is a holy day. Now it is proved, both by history and by science, that such a weekly interval is not only good and useful, but that it is necessary for the welfare of the human race. Just as sleep is needful after the work of the day, so is the interval of one day in seven, in which human thought may more specially ascend ; a day in which the body may rest from its ordinary toil, and the mind have leisure to commune with the Unseen and Eternal. But the way in which we are to spend that resting-day, the amount of time we are to devote to social worship or to solitary thought, is not defined. The reason is obvious. It must vary with the individual, and no worshipper can prescribe details to another. The one point is that we recognize, and rejoice in, the leisure which the first day of the week brings to us, the opportunity of release from the turmoil and the conflicts of our mundane life. While we thus breathe a serener air, and receive strength from the fountain-head, we are able to return to our other work with new ardour, enthusiasm, and hope.

V.—When the fifth commandment is repeated in our hearing we should include within it the dead, as well as the living. Certainly those who have lost their parents have to practice it as much as those whose parents are still alive ; and, in many cases, the former can do this

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

better than the latter can. We "honour" our blessed dead, the parents who are gone from us, by thoughts of reverence and gratitude, and by acts of loyalty to their memory ; above all by new efforts to live worthy of them, and of all that we have received from them. But, alike to the living and the dead, this honour does not imply slavish deference, or even unreasoning obedience. Children may surely differ from their parents' views on many things. They cannot help doing so, and their honour is not to be measured by their assent to all that they were taught in infancy. Nay, they may be all the more respectful, and genuinely filial, when they differ in opinion. These differences arise unconsciously, but the great thing in the relationship of children to parents is this, the maintenance unsevered, nay increased and expanded, of the ties of love, gratitude, and honour, the sense of immeasurable debt, of services rendered which can never be adequately repaid (and which no noble parent ever wishes repaid) ; while the new generation enters into its new heritage in the true, the beautiful, and the good, a heritage of attainment of progress and success. "Honour your father and your mother" in your thoughts, in your feelings, by your words, and by your acts ; and, when you are far from them—I say this to those who are at school, and whose parents are alive—don't forget to tell them, out of a full heart, the things they long to know about you ; for remember this, while you may have many friends in this world, you can have only one father and one mother.

VI.—The sixth commandment deals with the sin, or rather the crime, of murder, "Thou shalt not kill." But we must not confine it to the taking away of life ; it is much wider, and more comprehensive. I suppose that

THINGS NEW AND OLD

very few who hear this commandment repeated week by week are ever tempted to the crime of murder, in the sense of killing other people. But is the commandment, therefore, inapplicable to them? By no means. There are many kinds of murder. Some persons murder other people's character. They kill the reputation of their friends. They destroy their good name, by slander; and at times, alas! simply by ill-natured gossip. You may do a far worse service to your neighbour than destroy his body. You may inflict a fatal blow to his good name. You may injure him vitally and fatally by your talk. How comes it that so many cannot keep their tongue from evil; and their lips from speaking guile; and by this base habit of slander, or even by mere chattering gossip, are guilty of murdering reputations, both when they speak and when they write, or take part in social gatherings! Therefore, when you read, or hear this commandment read, broaden it out to cover much more than physical or bodily murder.

VII.—And similarly broaden out the seventh; for this, like all the rest, is “exceeding broad.” It refers not only to acts, but to thoughts and desires. It extends to all speech and behaviour; and if we translate it (as we ought) from the negative to the positive, it is a commandment which covers much of our life. It is intended to direct us, and to restrain us, both in what we think in what we say, and in what we do. It bears on soul and body alike; and what it ordains, if once lost, is very seldom regained. It is a very vital commandment to the young; and, if ignored or disregarded, all noble friendship is blighted, high aspirations degenerate by slow degrees, heroic self-sacrifice fades away, the edge of chivalry is blunted, and the lower levels of the life of

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

sense are soon reached. Therefore in reference to it, recall the ancient words, "Keep thy heart above all keeping, for out of it are the issues of life."

VIII.—In the eighth commandment we are warned not to steal; but what is theft? Here again we must broaden out the precept. The violent seizure of another person's worldly goods, or the secret theft of his property, is not a temptation to which many in Christendom are exposed. But just as in the case of murder, the theft may be of another's character and good name; or, it may be the theft of his ideas appropriated without acknowledgment, the use of information or of discoveries made by another, concealing the source whence the knowledge or discovery has been obtained. Nay, I think that every effort made to obtain a desired result by taking "short cuts" to reach it, instead of patiently pursuing the longer ones (school-boys may take note of this—the use of "cribs" for example), falls under the condemnation of this commandment. Certainly getting others to do work for us and not acknowledging the service, appropriating their work as it had been our own, is a species of theft; and in our use of this eighth precept of the decalogue we should expand it to cover every possible case of stealing, however remote, concealed, and indirect.

IX.—The ninth commandment is "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour;" but don't confine your thought of this to a Court of Law, and to the chance of your being ever called there to give evidence as a witness. That would be only one of the cases in which its application would come in. But it is possible to bear false witness against our neighbour throughout the whole of life. The commandment overlaps experience every hour. It bears upon daily sports, the

THINGS NEW AND OLD

common conversation of friends, the gossip of acquaintances, the talk of the school ; in all of which false witness is borne quite as often as it is in Courts of Law. I have mentioned gossip. Well, there is innocent as well as faulty gossip, just as there is an innocent as well as a pernicious frivolity. But note what ordinarily takes place in the course of household or society gossip, and how much "false witness" against our neighbours enters into it. The repetition and circulation of scandal—which may be true, or may be false, but is best buried in oblivion—is distinctly condemned by this commandment. Is it not the case that ordinary gossip always tends more and more to exaggeration ; that the lingering over, and the restating of trivialities about other people's conduct, or their affairs, very often ends in the falsification of the facts of the case ?

X.—The tenth, and last, commandment—which bears upon covetousness—is, I think, as broad as any of the others, and it is perhaps more frequently ignored or broken than the rest. We are told, in the New Testament, that "covetousness is idolatry ;" and this gives us a link of connection between the second and the tenth commandments. But its root is envy ; and when envy blossoms into covetousness, human character is injured at the very core. Here, again, of course there is a good as well as a bad kind of covetousness ; and we are counselled to "covet earnestly the best gifts." But the "covetousness which is idolatry" is the selfish wish to possess what others have. It is a widespread, deep-rooted vice, against which the Christian religion has from the very first borne a continuous protest. The attitude of mind and heart condemned is not the wish to accumulate, to attain to greater things ; for another of the mottoes

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

of our holy religion is "forgetting what is behind, reach out to that which is before." But then, the spirit to be cherished throughout every step of this aspiration is an unenvious delight in what others possess, although we do not possess it, a sense of restful joy in the contemplation of things belonging to them, which are their property, or inheritance, and which never can be ours. All grasping avarice, the selfish pursuit of pleasure, jealousy of others, the desire to eclipse or outstrip them by obtaining what they have—whether it be riches, or fame, or titles, or knowledge, or admiration—is explicitly condemned, whenever this commandment is repeated in our hearing.

And now, in the light of the width of these ten precepts, as they bear upon our modern life and practice, we may surely say, with a deep, prolonged, and most fervent response, "Write all these thy laws in our hearts, O Lord, we beseech Thee." For observe, it is not only an intellectual admiration of the width of the commandments that is incumbent on us. A high, moral enthusiasm for them is also needed. Each time we hear them read, and respond in prayer, "Incline our hearts to keep this Law," we should not only realize its exceeding length and breadth and height and depth, but should identify our inmost life with it, and it with our life; and we will soon find that it is "a law of liberty."

Remember also that the lives of all the great who have gone before us, of all the heroes of the world, have been—consciously or unconsciously—lives of fealty and allegiance to these ten Commandments of the Jews. To act them out in their exceeding breadth has given strength and consistency, nobleness and fruitfulness and joy, to the lives of thousands and tens of thousands,

THINGS NEW AND OLD

“who now rest from their labours, while their works do follow them.” And such loyalty to the commandments, “whose service is perfect freedom,” gives clearness of mind as well as strength of character. It imparts serenity of spirit, as well as freshness of perception, the very joy of the morning, and ends in a “peace that passeth understanding.”

And now unto Him, who is able to keep us from falling, and to present us before his presence with exceeding joy, be glory, etc.

XX.

The Conquest of Evil.

In St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, chap. xii., 21, it is written—
"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

THERE is a striking contrast between the earlier chapters of St. Paul's letter to the Church at Rome in which doctrine is discussed, and the later ones in which the sphere of practice is entered. From the twelfth chapter onwards we are in a new region of thought, and we breathe a different atmosphere. From the intricate passages of abstract reasoning, which are sometimes like the labyrinthine windings of a forest track, we seem to come out of a sudden into clear air and sunlight. And it is worthy of note that at this stage, when the writer's thought is deeper and fuller, his style becomes clearer and more aphoristic. In the last section of his letter St. Paul approaches nearer to the language of his Master, although, even in this rich twelfth chapter of his epistle, we do not find either the height, the breadth, or the depth of the Sermon on the Mount. We come across no sentences clear as crystal yet with "a reserve of unfathomable meaning." The perennial wonder about the great sayings of Christ is that they are so simple that a child can understand them in part, and so profound that they never yield up all their secrets to any intellect or heart. But if ever St. Paul came near to his Master in vividness of insight and power of speech, it was here ;

THINGS NEW AND OLD

when borne into the upper Heaven of inspiration, he wrote these chapters on practical duty. There may be passages in his writings of greater sweep and compass, and many of them are more fervent in their appeal; but he never gave grander advice than this, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

You will see its comprehensiveness by supposing it to be universally practised. Its realization would transfigure Humanity, rectifying and readjusting all our relationships. It would lessen the ills that now blight the world, in a way of which we can only have a faint conception. It would give us a fuller knowledge both of the character of God, and of our duty to each other.

The two things last mentioned mutually support each other; and in order to see the force of the rule in the sphere of human conduct, mark in the first instance how it explains the divine procedure. It is noteworthy that the rule of overcoming evil by good is a law for man's life, partly because it is a principle which embodies the action of the Almighty. It has always led to grave mistakes to represent the glory of God as consisting in its unlikeness to humanity. On the contrary, it is in God that we see the archetype of humanity. The Divine perfection is not realized in a sphere beyond the operation of the laws which regulate human conduct. Its perfection consists in the allegiance of the Infinite to these very laws. In other words, the duty which binds us, the laws which we must obey, the virtues we must practise, eternally bound, were obeyed, and put in practice by God from everlasting. Although much more is included within his immeasurable perfection, what He calls on us to do, He has himself done, is now doing,

THE CONQUEST OF EVIL

and will continue to all eternity to do. We are not to be overcome by evil, because God is not overcome by it, but is ceaselessly vanquishing it by good.

We may see and realize this from two points of view. Look first at the history of the human race. See how it has slowly advanced to its present state, through the conquest of innumerable evils which have threatened it, but been gradually lessened, and some of them extinguished. It is true that thousands remain unsubdued; but is not the story of our race the record of an upward rise from barbaric forms of life to higher, nobler, better ones? If a law of progress did not run through the annals of our race, our faith in the Divine power to effect the ends of goodness, and create a kingdom of righteousness, might be shaken. But to an eye that can see spiritual forces at work underneath natural causes, the whole history of the world is a record of the law of progress and evolution. In the wondrous advance of the diffusions of truth, the victories of righteousness, the amelioration of manners, the diminution of crime, the extinction of certain forms of cruelty and wrong, we find illustrations of the way in which the Governor of the world has been overcoming evil by good.

Then turn to what is central in human history, viz., the life of Jesus Christ. That life was the outcome of a Divine plan for overcoming evil by good. Evil had entered into the world, how we need not at present ask; except to note that its occurrence has been the condition of the very highest good. But, when it entered, God did not act on the principle of letting men alone to reap the fruit of their doings, leaving the race to its sin and misery. On the contrary, He acted as if He had said, through the lips of a prophet or seer, "I shall overcome

THINGS NEW AND OLD

the worst evils that have arisen by my greatest good. I shall give this human race of my best, and conquer it by love." He sent many messengers previously to unfold his will. At last He sent his Son, saying "Perchance they will reverence my Son." And, when He came, his very mission was the conquest of evil. Look through the whole life of Christ, and see whether this sentence of St. Paul does not become more intelligible in the light of it. The perfection of its sacrifice lay in this. It was not a performance, or transaction, standing alone; but the revelation of an eternal principle, a manifestation finitely in time of what had always existed in the heart of the Infinite, although it was not always manifest. And as we now look back upon that life, we see an intention revealed on the part of God to conquer our evil by his good; not simply to punish it, but to abolish it, and to do so by returning good for evil.

We pass, in the second place, to the consideration of this rule as it bears upon our own practice. We are to be "imitators of God" in this: and, if we do so, we may not regard any evil under which we suffer as incurable. They can all be fought and overcome, by good: and while we address ourselves to the task, the conviction that they are removable, that they are the accidents, rather than the essentials, of our terrestrial life, and have no root of endurance because they have no right to be where they are, that they are curable diseases, should help us in dealing with them, one and all. But how are we to proceed in our endeavour?

In answering this question, let us take up special cases. One of the most obvious of them is when we either receive an injury, or fancy that we do so. If we are wronged, misconstrued, misunderstood; if we are slighted

THE CONQUEST OF EVIL

or suspected or disliked, if our good is evil spoken of, and we are injured by these things, how should we act under such discipline? Are we to revenge ourselves on our detractors or calumniators, or stand aloof from them? St. Paul answers the question for us in a sentence preceding the text, "Avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath": and one of our own poets has said,

The fairest action of our human life

Is scorning to avenge an injury.

But you may observe that the Christian spirit rises higher than the mere scorn of revenge. It puts the duty of doing positive good to those who injure us in the place of the negative virtue of abstaining from retaliation. St. Paul wrote: "If thine enemy hunger, feed him. If he thirsts give him to drink; for in so doing, thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head." And in still finer words his Master spoke; "I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven, for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust." "If ye love them which love you, what reward have ye, what do ye more than others? Be ye perfect, even as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

You see then it is not mere abstention from retaliation that is the rule of the Christian life. It is the positive return of good for evil. "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them," that is the law of Christian morality. If we wish to receive good and not evil, we must universally practise good to others, whatsoever we may receive from them.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

This, which is a very plain thought, ought to become a practical one. If we are ever tempted to act otherwise,—if not to “avenge ourselves,” at least to wish that any one who has wronged us should suffer for it—note that according to the rule laid down by our Master, and according to his practice, we are not only to bridle that tendency, but to practise the very opposite, and that is to say we must overcome the evil we have suffered from, by some good deed of ours. We are overcome by evil, whenever we yield to revenge, or become indifferent to the good and the welfare of those who do us wrong. If we say (or even think); “It’s no concern of mine. Let him reap as he has sown, let him look after himself, for to his own master he stands or falls,” we forget that, in a real sense, we are all our brothers’ keepers; not the keepers of their consciences—and we may not presume to dictate to them what they should believe, or what they should do—but we are their keepers in the sense that we are bound to help them, and “do them good as we have opportunity;” and above all things to aid them in the conquest of their faults, whatsoever they may do to us.

What higher felicity can you conceive of than this, to be helpful to those who surround you in the expansion of their minds and the elevation of their hearts, helping them to “rise on the stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things.” This is blessedness, and a privilege within reach of us all; and it is thus that we have the richest reward, and the noblest influence, over the lives of our fellow-creatures.

There are, however, other evils that are purely personal to which, in the second place, this maxim also applies. If we are not to be overcome of evil as we see it in society, in the tendencies at work around us; neither

THE CONQUEST OF EVIL

are we to be overcome by it as it exists within ourselves, in the habits we may have formed. Are we not all at times the victims of these ? It may be the outbreak of a fiery temper, or the querulousness of a discontented soul, the suspiciousness of an uncharitable heart, the jealousy of a selfish spirit, the rashness of ungenerous judgment, or the sordidness of a worldly nature. We may have been "overcome" by these things, but we are never to be beaten by them, or to despair of the conquest of such faults ; and we are in this as in the former case, to conquer the evil by the good ; that is to say not by merely trying to bridle or control our downward tendencies, but by fostering upward ones ; by directing our energies along natural channels, and in beneficent directions. We always succeed best in the conquest of evil by first finding out what the good is, of which the evil is only an exaggeration or a caricature. Anger, for example, which is a base passion, sometimes springs out of a sense of justice aroused against an existing evil. Then it is justifiable, and its absence would be a defect. But its excess in fury or revenge is a travesty of the good from which it started. So with other evils, of which the list need not be now drawn out.

Note, finally, that one of the highest forms of goodness is in a certain sense aggressive, or combative. We are to "overcome" and conquer evil. That implies resistance, and intolerance towards evil. We are not to permit curable faults to linger, if we can banish them in a sacred crusade. The "meekness and gentleness" of the Christian life is not to extinguish a fiery energy of zeal ; and there is not only room for "sons of thunder" within the Church, but the spirit of these sons should animate more or less every soul in Christendom. Let none of us then be overcome

THINGS NEW AND OLD

by those evils which we have either inherited or contracted, but resist them by active deed, by warfare, by the utmost energy of will, "taking to ourselves" (as this same apostle says) "the whole armour of God," and "fighting the good fight" daily, while we also practise the passive virtues "unto the end."

Now to Him, etc.

XXI.

Spending, Saving, Giving.

"What I spent, I had ; what I saved,
I lost ; what I gave, I have."

A GREAT painter recently dead, the chief of those who have devoted their genius to symbolic Art, some years ago produced a picture which he named "Sic transit gloria mundi," and on it he painted, as an additional explanatory motto, "What I spent, I had ; what I saved, I lost ; what I gave, I have."

These words may be used as the text of an address on the true nature of Possession. If we ask, Is there anything that endures when all else decays? is there a possession which can be carried with us wheresoever we go, and taken into any new realm of experience? we may find an answer in the sentence just repeated. On the surface it seems a contradiction, but it is one of those sayings which contain within them profoundest truth beneath the surface.

It is obvious enough that we must have had what we spent. We could not use it, in any way, without first possessing it ; although there are many who spend what is not their own, but what they only fancy to be theirs, or what they have laid hold of. Many spend the property of other people, and waste it.

Note, parenthetically, no one has a right to spend anything except what has been obtained in one or other of three ways ; either first by inheritance, secondly by special gift, or thirdly by honest toil and labour ; and the last is the best of the three ! while, in each and every case,

THINGS NEW AND OLD

he ought to hand on to others in the future as much as he has received from predecessors in the past. Still the first clause of the maxim is obvious enough. What we all have spent—whether we had, or had not, the right to spend it—we once possessed. Rightly or wrongly we “had it” for the time being. But the motto adds, “What I saved, I lost.” Now, on the surface this seems untrue; because “saving” is not only one of the conditions of possession, but one of the sources (and the main source) of the accumulation of capital. As embodying the great virtue of thrift, it tends to the strength and consolidation both of individual and national character. What we thus save is certainly not squandered, but reserved for future use. Then the third clause of the motto, “What I gave, I have,” seems equally false on the surface; because what we give away is obviously not retained by us, but is parted with for the sake of others.

It is now my aim to shew how these statements—which on the surface seem false, or at least paradoxical—are, beneath the surface, true; how if we break the shell of the paradox, we find a kernel of rich significance within. As statements of prosaic fact, or as maxims of political economy, they are not applicable to our lives on this planet in the twentieth century of the Christian Era. But when taken figuratively—when interpreted as maxims of religious experience—they embody, and grandly express, the very profoundest truths. I shall try to make this apparent.

1.—We need not linger over the first statement, as it is sufficiently obvious. Everything that we spend, we must first possess; be it money, influence, intellect, fame, or (best of all) character. Whatsoever we spend upon ourselves, or whatsoever we give to others, we must first

SPENDING ; SAVING ; GIVING

of all have had, however we came to get it. But the special point in the first clause of the aphorism, and that which gives it moral significance, is this. Everything that we spend upon ourselves is lost, as soon as it is thus spent. What we devote to personal ends or aims is gone from us, so soon as it is thus devoted. It once was ours, but is ours no longer. In other words we cannot lay up any capital by personal expenditure. If we start with a spendthrift idea—or even if we begin with the notion “I have so much that I can use for myself, if I choose to do so”—we will lose it, in thus spending it ; because it does not add to our intellectual or moral capital, or increase that which endures.

2.—But it is when we reach the second statement, “What I saved, I lost,” that perplexities arise. This is a paradox which demands explanation, although its explanation is not difficult to find. Everyone knows what “saving” means ; and “thrift,” as already said, is the condition of all accumulation of capital. In other words, our not “living from hand to mouth,” and spending all that we have and acquire, is necessary to future gain. But now observe, what we thus save is not really ours. It is laid up by us, as wheat is stored in a granary. It may be of future use to other persons, but to us who have accumulated, or saved it, it is practically “lost ;” not because it has ceased to be, but because we cannot use it in the future. Others may, but we cannot. It comes to this, that what we “store away,” we may store for others ; but for ourselves, as soon as it is stored, it becomes “flat, stale, and unprofitable,” like the manna which we are told the wandering tribes of Israel tried to carry with them in the desert. This is specially true of religious experience. We cannot store it up in any

THINGS NEW AND OLD

profitable way. The old cannot educate us, if there is nothing new intermingled and upbound with it ; and this is the case alike in childhood, in youth, and in age. Again to quote from ancient Scripture, as a Hebrew prophet put it, we must "arise, and depart " out of past experience, "for it is not our rest."

Consider the position of the miser, who is always trying to accumulate a hoard, and to store it up. He is proverbially a miserable man ; and, having lived a life of penury and solitude, when he dies and his hoard is distributed, no one is really the better for it. But the point I ask you to note is this. The miserly spirit is not confined to those who amass a hoard of money. It is found in the religious world. It is seen amongst the students of knowledge. It is known at schools and colleges. It exists in every one of the professions subsequently entered, when the days of education are passed. Many persons, pressing on professionally, are misers in this sense. They are so eager to outstrip and eclipse others, that they hoard their knowledge, storing it up for themselves. But what they thus "save," they ultimately "lose." It never comes back to them with the interest of having borne fruit in other minds, which it might have entered to enrich. I have known some very selfish students of knowledge, who not only strove to outstrip competitors—that is of course a natural and laudable ambition—but also to prevent others from having an equal chance with themselves (a very different thing), and who have unfortunately managed to do it.

In such cases it is profoundly true that "what they saved, they lost." No such "saving," along selfish lines, is ever ultimately beneficial to the "saver ;" his character is hurt by his penuriousness. And next, what has thus

SPENDING ; SAVING ; GIVING

been saved, cannot be made use of to future profit. The winner in such a race is naturally, and necessarily, disliked. He makes few friends, and his victories do not enrich him.

While this is true, we must always remember that the habit of saving is a real virtue, that the spendthrift is always blameworthy, and that knowledge as well as money may be squandered. But, on the other hand, in order to lay up treasure that will endure, we should be careful as to the kind of storehouse in which we lay it up. There are those into which thieves can break, in order to steal ; and, if you ask what storehouses are proof against such theft, I reply, that it is only when treasure has been laid up in other human lives, by the services rendered to them, by the good we have done to them, it is only then that it is securely sent on to posterity, and safeguarded from disaster.

Since we have been thinking of the intellectual miser, who collects without a thought of giving, a corollary may be added as to the collector in general ; whether he gathers plants, or minerals, or pictures, or books, or autograph letters, or coins, or any other thing that youths or men and women collect. It is this. At last to the hammer the collections all return to be dispersed anew. The process of collecting may do much good for a time to the collector, but he cannot retain what he collects ; nor can his family do so, be they peers or peasants. All treasures of an external kind must ultimately be broken up, and scattered. The only ones that can be preserved, carried about, and taken away by us, are the treasures of life and character. If the storehouses be within, the treasures may be incorruptible, and both of them divine.

THINGS NEW AND OLD

3.—And now we come to the third point in our axiom, or aphorism, viz., the grand and glowing truth, embodied in the phrase, "What I gave, I have." Well, when we part with anything, we are certainly accustomed to think that we have lost it. But observe its destination, if rightly, wisely, and unselfishly bestowed. If parted with—in obedience to the Divine rule, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—it goes from us, to help, enrich, encourage, assist, and benefit others; but that is not its sole destiny. It returns to the giver in many ways. Its very function, its office, is to return; to come back, though not in the form in which it was given. The act of bestowal, the help rendered to another, expands the nature of the giver. It so enlarges his character, that he positively is enriched by what he has given away.

Consider this profound law of human nature. If you part with a possession outwardly, you may retain the best of it inwardly. Take specific instances. You find that a friend, or acquaintance, would like to possess something which you happen to have. Finding this out, you give it to him, or to her. Well, who is the richer, your friend, or you? the recipient, or the donor? If what you gave had intrinsic value—if it was costly, or rare—your friend may seem to have gained much, and you to have lost much. But, it is often the very reverse. Why so? and how so? For this reason. One of the greatest lessons we can learn, one of the most useful, although hardest to acquire, is not how many things we can accumulate and use, but how many things we can do without. Thus lightly equipped—with few wants, and these easily supplied—we are able to benefit others, because we are not burdened with the *impedimenta* which drag so many to the earth; and again, because every act

SPENDING ; SAVING ; GIVING

of generosity, of kindness, and helpfulness to others, strikes a new root into the soil of character, enlarging the life of the giver.

The poet of *The Christian Year* has written four memorable lines—

Freely Thou givest, and thy word

Is "Freely give."

He only who forgets to hoard

Has learned to live.

And a greater poet of last century once wrote of that which he said made up the best part of a good man's life, viz. :—

His little nameless unremembered acts

Of kindness and of love.

Another singer of our times has written—

Measure thy life by loss, and not by gain,

Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth,

For life's strength standeth in self-sacrifice,

And who hath given most, hath most to give.

The conclusion of the whole matter is this. The glory, the dignity, the immeasurable gain, as well as the joy of giving through life, from youth to age, in sickness and in health, urged by the strong desire to work increasingly for other people, rather than to amass a perishable fortune of money, or fame, or influence, is a quite superlative experience. In a noble sonnet Mrs. Browning wrote—

Work, work, work ;

'Tis better than what you work to get.

And such work, as is magnified and made honourable in the maxim we have been considering, is a sovereign antidote to that life-weariness which so often oppresses the

THINGS NEW AND OLD

best and bravest of mankind. When we are weary of our work, because we think it fruitless, and duty is hard because it seems unprofitable, turn from the visible to the Invisible, and realize again, and again, and yet again those "treasures which moth and rust do not corrupt, and which no thief can steal."

You may remember how Carlyle rendered the song of Goethe which he called "a stanza of the grand road-song, and marching-song of our great Teutonic kindred, wending, wending, valiant and victorious, through the undiscovered deeps of time."

The mason's ways are
A type of existence,
And his persistence
Is as the days are
Of men in this world.

The future hides in it
Gladness and sorrow,
We press still thorough,
Naught that abides in it
Daunting us onward.

And solemn before us
Veiled the dark portal,
Goal of all mortal.
Stars silent rest o'er us,
Graves under us silent.

While earnest thou gazest,
Comes boding of terror,
Comes phantasm and error,
Perplexes the bravest
With doubt and misgiving.

SPENDING ; SAVING ; GIVING

But heard are the Voices,
Heard are the Sages,
The Worlds and the Ages,
"Choose well ; your choice is
"Brief, and yet endless."

"Here eyes do regard you
"In eternity's stillness,
"Here is all fulness
"Ye brave to reward you,
"Work, and despair not."

Now to God, etc.

XXII.

Self-Search and Self-Control.

"I thought on my ways."—Psalm cxix., 59.

"Be wise, and guide thine heart in the way."—Proverbs xxiii., 19.

IT is a somewhat sad reflection that we undergo many experiences in life without being enriched by them, or receiving the benefit which they might impart. We merely go through them; but do not thereby become any wiser, or stronger, or better. In looking back, we do not find that we have gained substantial advantage from our experiences. But our retrospect or self-search in order to discover this, while always difficult, is sometimes deceptive; and it frequently eludes us altogether. So much is this the case that we are advised by some never to attempt the task of self-analysis, but to press steadily forward without any effort at introspection.

Perhaps in this, as in so much else, the path of wisdom lies between opposite extremes. If truth may be defined as the intellectual mean between extremes of judgment, duty is certainly the golden mean between extremes of conduct; and there is a tendency amongst many persons to be too introspective, analysing emotions, questioning tendencies, to discover if possible how it is faring with them in the region where the seeds of character take root and grow. That tendency very easily becomes morbid; and those who practise it fall to the level of the valetudinarian, who loses health by thinking too much about it; and so we cannot wonder at the advice to give it up, and never look within, or "think upon our ways." But that

SELF-SEARCH AND SELF-CONTROL

advice is equally one-sided. If we drift along on the upper surface of things, enjoying existence as much as we can, craving fresh experience and giving ourselves up to the influence of the day and the hour, such a superficial style of life will—equally with its opposite—leave us unenriched in character. Very little thought is needed to shew the difference between a habit of fidgetty self-search, and a thoughtful, calm, and reasonable scrutiny of conduct.

Everyone knows how often states of feeling are produced in us by causes over which we have no control. The circumstances which surround us, the actions of our friends, the tone of the society in which we move, the state of the weather, the changes of the seasons, the questions of the hour in the State or in the Church, our own fluctuating health, all these produce in us states of feeling which we think inevitable, because they are not directly amenable to our control; and, in consequence, we do not “think upon our ways,” while we experience them.

Well it is an obvious duty to accept with thankfulness our lot in life, while we strive to better it, not wasting strength in fruitless regrets that we had not lived in a different age or land, or had been differently educated, and started on life's journey. But it is the opposite duty which balances this one—the duty of a thoughtful consideration of what we are, and are tending to become—that is before us now. And there is surely as much need for this thoughtfulness, as there is for an acquiescent trust in that Providence that has placed us here and now. Such serious-mindedness is not the same thing as anxious-mindedness; and it is to the want of thoughtful pondering, to the absence of reflection, that the majority

THINGS NEW AND OLD

of men and women run into so many extremes, and incur so many losses. Some find it irksome thus to look within, and think it specially alien to the period of youth, when enjoyment is keenest, and natural delights are most relished. They think it may have its uses at the decline or close of life, when our enthusiasms are lessened, and vivacity is gradually diminished. Only a slight acquaintance of the past, however, and a slight exercise of memory, will shew us that without such heedfulness, and a survey of what we have thought and felt and spoken and done, there can be neither consistency of character nor any real progress. And with a view to it we may take a few simple instances of thinking on our past ways.

The first is when reflection and memory disclose some obvious fault that has been committed; such, for example, as an outbreak of temper, of querulousness or complaint, a harsh ungrateful act, or selfish deed by which we have wounded the feelings of other people, given them unnecessary pain, added to the burdens they have to bear, and hindered if not thwarted their progress. I do not suppose there is one of us here present who has not transgressed in these ways against our neighbours perhaps within their own home, during the past week. If so, why should we ignore the voice that hints of such neglects, or such offences? The most educated, disciplined, and refined will say "Amen" to this. Only the obtruse, or the callous-hearted will ignore it. Do we not all transgress by hard and selfish thought, by inconsiderate speech, by ungenerous, unappreciative, unamiable conduct? We become exacting and arrogant, thrusting our opinion or advice on other people, laying down the law as to what they should think, believe, or do. Well then, in reference to such an offensive, querulous and un-

SELF-SEARCH AND SELF-CONTROL

lovely habit, let us "think upon our ways." The best way to subdue a fault is first to scrutinize it, to look it in the face, tear the mask from it, and then to turn our back upon it; first confess it, and be not ashamed to own it, then rise superior to it, remembering how a sweet singer has said—

That men may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.

It is not necessary to take a very large inventory of other faults that at times "prevail against us;" but here is one of omission, with which we are all chargeable less or more. It is the want of a thankful spirit, the absence of gratitude, and those benign feelings to which a sense of indebtedness to others gives rise. It will perhaps appear singular, the moment we turn the eye of introspection (or of retrospect) upon it, how little this spirit of thankfulness exists in our lives. We eagerly seize what we can get in life, and anxiously strive for more, ever wishful to receive; but how seldom do we give explicit conscious thanks for that stream of blessing, by which we are everlastingly enriched. I do not mean give verbal acknowledgment, but simply realize—with full conviction and adequate appreciation—the measure of our indebtedness, the extent, the range, the compass, and the endless variety of the gifts we receive. A great many persons drift almost unconsciously into the habit of receiving and enjoying, of absorbing and possessing, without any "giving of thanks." They live as if all others were debtors to them, and as if they had only to receive from one and all their own personal rights. But without finding any farther fault with the tendency, I offer this advice. Seize every occasion in which the mind is composed, and the heart is tranquil, when a sense of

THINGS NEW AND OLD

restfulness prevails over anxiety or depression, and realize how much there is in this life of ours to be grateful for. Let us take advantage of that fine weather of experience, and lay up a store of gratitude, a stock of thankfulness, by the simple process of taking an inventory of the things which have blessed us in the past, are now enriching us, and which have the prospect of remaining with us in the future.

And we may include some other things in this "thinking of our ways." I pass over the graver faults of self-indulgence with the single remark, that if we recall the past, we will very easily find many of them that need not have been, actions by which others have been made poorer, and ourselves not by any means enriched. Day by day in little things we allow others to toil for us, to sow and to reap for us, when we might have toiled ourselves. There are some who are instinctively and profoundly self-sacrificing, who never in any conscious act live for self alone. But they are few who thus deny themselves; and some do not manage their self-sacrifice wisely. They let it flow along channels where it is wasted. This, however, is rare, and need not farther be alluded to now; for other faults must be mentioned which will be discovered when we "think upon our ways."

There is the fault of suspiciousness, or misconstruing the acts of others, or thinking evil of them. It does not matter whether the thought be true, or the suspicion unfounded, we should not think evil of others, although the evil might be found if searched for. The office of the moral detective is not difficult to learn, but it is not for us to practise; because, if indulged by us, where is such a habit to end? As we all have innumerable faults, our lives might be spent in searching for moles in the eyes

SELF-SEARCH AND SELF-CONTROL

of others. The habit of the incessant fault-finder is one of the most unlovely that exists; and it leads to the invention of evils that are not present, but are only imagined to exist.

I mention another fault, to which some are little tempted, but from which others suffer innumerable ills. It is that of envy. There is, however, no fault which, when discovered and rightly dealt with, can be more easily overcome, none which in this life can be more completely eradicated. There are many characters in which not a spark of envy is to be seen, and in which it may be truly said that none exists. They look with serene, unenvious eye on the joys, the possessions, the successes, the attainments, and the honours of other people, glad that they have received what has been withheld from themselves. That is perhaps a commoner virtue in the Church than the envious world gives it credit for possessing. But of how many is the opposite true? You speak to them of what another has; and their first thought is, how can I get it also? be it a possession, or an honour, or a success. Even in noble natures this spirit puts on strange disguises; and there are few who if they search will not find some traces of it in their thought or speech or behaviour.

But now, with these few samples of faults which occasionally prevail against us selected, because they may be relevant ones, consider how much happier and more blessed our lives would be, how much more fruitful the result to others, if some, if not all, of them were extinguished. "I have called my ways to remembrance," wrote the Hebrew psalmist; and that saying of his, "I have thought upon my conduct," is the very best way—perhaps the only conscious way—by which our conduct

THINGS NEW AND OLD

can be mended. We must ponder what we have done, and been ; we must scrutinize it, turn it to the light, and when it is thus disclosed, note to what it amounts, and whither it is tending. If we examine our past deeds, we will see our characters mirrored in them. And the glass of the law of the Eternal will shew us not only what we are, but what we are becoming, what is in store for us ; since we are, up to one-half of what we shall be, the architects of our own characters. We may lament much that is disclosed to us. We may regret that we are so little able to guide our lives in the right way. That is certainly the chief cause of sadness to the noblest and the best of our race. But, if it is so, there is hope for the conquest of our faults in the very sorrow that we feel. While we lament the existence of those evils which rob us of serenity, which hamper our freedom, and hinder our progress, we may remember that there is One "who worketh in us." "It is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves," and "He that made us will guide." Let us then "think upon our ways." Continue in the devout practice of this rule of holy living, this counsel of divine perfection ; and Another will "work in us to will and to do of his good will," guiding us in the way of righteousness, which is the way everlasting.

Now unto Him, etc.

XXIII.

The Unknown God.

In the Acts of the Apostles, chapter xvii., 22, it is written—
“Whom ye ignorantly worship Him declare I unto you.”

To all Christendom there is undying interest in the visit of St. Paul to Athens, in his attitude towards the Greek people, and more especially in the address which he delivered in the Metropolis. The latter has been often misunderstood, and the examination of it is most instructive to the modern world. Not a word of it is superannuated, but every sentence is as relevant now as it was nineteen hundred years ago. In addition it supplies the Church with a model, or ideal, of a missionary address.

It was in no sense iconoclastic, not even directed against the current worship of the Greek people. It was a declaration to them of a fact which the speaker felt that he knew, but which they did not know; a disclosure to those who worshipped ignorantly of what underlay their worship, a truth more important than anything that had previously entered into their minds, or influenced their lives. There was no denunciation of ancient usage, of the use and wont of the past, but there was the announcement of something altogether new. He sympathised with, approved of, and cordially praised the religious devotion of the Greek people. But when walking through their city he had seen an altar with the curious inscription on it, “To the Unknown God.” This had arrested him. It aroused his religious sympathy, and his fine imaginative discernment. The burden

THINGS NEW AND OLD

of his mesage was, "You worship, but you do it ignorantly ; and what you dimly grope after, that I now make clear and explicit to you." He did not blame the worshippers, even for their polytheism, as that was better than agnosticism. The recognition of many divine powers was better than the want of any acknowledgment of God. But he tried to teach them that the idea of a similitude between works "graven by art and man's device," and the Divine Being they were intended to represent, was untenable ; while idol-worship was a degrading and an evil practice.

It is noteworthy that in this he was at one with the teaching of all the nobler philosophies of Greece, and that he was not opposed to the higher enlightenment of the Hellenic spirit, to the wisdom of Socrates and Plato. He only wished to supplement it, to add new truths, while he tried to illumine the old. But there is no doubt that while he was in Athens St. Paul was inwardly disturbed—incensed is perhaps the better word—at the state of the city ; and no wonder. He reached it trained only as a Pharisee and Hebrew adept, who had come under the tremendous revolutionary influence and upbuilding of the revelation made to him on the Damascus road ; and as an ardent disciple of the new faith, which had deepened in him through his efforts to plant Churches in the course of his travels. He waited there, in that central city of the ancient world, alone ; his soul stirred within him as he saw "the city full of idols." Nevertheless, he restrained himself, and went into the synagogue to debate with Jews and proselytes ; and, what was still more remarkable and momentous, to carry on work similar to that which Socrates practised, viz., discussing with all comers to the market-place who would listen to him. He

THE UNKNOWN GOD

wandered round about the Acropolis. Surely he must have climbed up its steps, and seen the Parthenon, with the City of the Violet Crown beneath it; and either there, or in some suburban alley, he saw the altar with the inscription, "To the Unknown God."

What a picture of him at this stage of his wanderings St. Luke has given us! There is no doubt that while in Athens he was a clear and level-headed student of all he saw around him—perhaps the nimblest-brained of all the foreign visitors in it—and that, without any knowledge (so far as we know) of the wondrous cross-examining sage who preceded him by four centuries, he worked in the same way as the chief teacher of the Athenian world. Who knows how many Socratic dialogues, or quasi-Socratic ones, or conversations better than any that Plato has recorded of his master, this wonderful Jew carried on with unrecorded men and women in Athens during these "waiting days," till his friends reached him, and he delivered his great address! And what would our modern world now give could it recover a fragment of these dialogues, which would cast such a flood of light on the speaker and his message.

Let any student of the "Acts of the Apostles," who also knows the "Dialogues" of Plato, realise how differently the latter addressed his students in the Academy—or Socrates his listeners in the Agora—from the way in which the central figure in the "Acts" tried to influence the spirits of his audience. He had none of the marvellous power of cross-examination which Socrates possessed, and used with such skill in his prison; he had none of the matchless literary grace which Plato showed in his written dialogues; but he had something higher, more unique, and world-commanding, due to that vision

THINGS NEW AND OLD

which he saw on his way to Damascus, and all the new insight which followed from it. And he came to Athens, not as an opponent, but as a new teacher of the people. He moved about amongst the educated Greeks all hungering for something novel, an educated Jew, with a message to impart to them more important for humanity at large than anything that Socrates had unfolded.

He was not at first successful, and his residence in the city was limited to a month. He intended to return to Macedonia, where he had two friends at work, Timothy and Silas ; but after his few weeks in Athens he went on alone to Corinth. His stay at Corinth was not a long one, but there he laid the foundation of that small community which grew into the Church to which he afterwards addressed two of his Epistles.

As to his work in Athens, he discussed their favourite problems with the representatives both of the Stoic and Epicurean philosophies. Some upbraided him as ignorant ; others thought him a setter forth of foreign gods because he spoke to them ' of Jesus and the Resurrection.' He excited their hatred, and they became rude in their conduct towards him. But he had arrested them, roused their interest, and they were disquieted by his speeches. So we are told that ' they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus,' placing him before their Council, and requested that he should unfold his new doctrine more fully. Athens was usually the most tolerant city in the ancient world, although its inhabitants were frequently carried away by blind prejudice. It was not because they really desired to know more of what St. Paul had said to them that they asked for a restatement of it, but because they were interested in its novelty. They were *quidnuncs*,

THE UNKNOWN GOD

fond of gossip, arrogant, vain, and had an undisguised contempt for any foreigner who considered himself wiser than they were. That a stranger should presume to know more than they did was abhorrent to their Athenian pride. Who was this Paul of Tarsus, that he should presume to teach the *illuminati* of the metropolis of Greece? They thought him bumptious, called him a 'spermologus,' that is to say, a picker up of scraps, and these of the poorest kind (mere refuse), and yet one who laid claim to be within the circle of the learned.

They therefore took him to the Areopagus, and before their august assembly he delivered what was perhaps the most memorable speech of his life. It was not to 'try him' that they took him there. He was not arraigned for any offence. He was simply asked to tell the senators more fully and exactly what his opinions were.

There has been a good deal of controversy as to the exact place to which he was taken, and where he delivered his address. The majority of writers have held that he was brought to the Hill (or rather the Rock) at which the Council sat to give judgment in cases of murder and assault. There are, however, many objections to this view. It was in the presence of the Council, and to the Council, that he spoke; but he had also a large audience of the Athenian people; and to suppose that they gathered round the base of that rock, while the Council sat upon it, is most improbable. It is far more likely that he stood and spoke in the Agora, or market-place, to the crowd that assembled there. He was taken by the Stoic and Epicurean devotees before the Council that they all might hear him say more, and explain further what he had already said. Close to the Agora was the Senate

THINGS NEW AND OLD

House and the King's Hall, no traces of which now survive, although their locality is known. Both the philosophers and senators regarded him as a travelling candidate for fame and fortune ; one covetous of success, like the rest of the peripatetic brotherhoods. And there was nothing unusual—certainly no indignity and no menace—in the act of bringing him before the supreme council of Athens. It is necessary for our understanding of what took place to remember that (as already said) in this liberal-minded city there was not only a large amount of tolerance for novelties in teaching, but a positive relish for them, although its liberalism often ended in indifference. Travelling lecturers in Athens had at times an eager, excited, and sympathetic audience ; and there was nothing unusual either in the permission granted to St. Paul to debate, or in the power of the supreme court of the city to see to his qualifications, and then decide as to his privileges.

All who are familiar with the life and work of Socrates are aware of his trial before the dicasts of Athens, and of the charges brought against him of attacking the popular religion, of introducing new divinities of his own, and of corrupting the youth. There is a curious parallel between the charges advanced against him, and the clamour against St. Paul. And we may remember that while the accused in Athens were commonly defended by skilled advocates, or sophists, who addressed their speeches not only to the judges, but also to the listening public, whose applause they sought to stir up with a view to influence the judges, neither Socrates nor St. Paul availed himself of such assistance. No herald of a new truth, no missionary of a great cause, no prophet or apostle, could do so.

THE UNKNOWN GOD

A very interesting contrast, as well as parallel, could be drawn out between the *Apologia* of Socrates and this address of St. Paul ; but it cannot be attempted now. I conclude with a (partially) new translation of the address itself :

‘ Men of Athens, I observe that in all things you are more respectful of what is divine than others are ; for, as I was walking through your city, and examining the monuments of your worship, I found amongst them an altar with the inscription on it, “ To the Unknown God.” That, then, which you worship, not knowing what it is, that Divine Being I endeavour to disclose to you. The God who made the world and all that therein is, being Lord of Heaven and of Earth, dwelleth not in any of the shrines set up by human hands. He is not served by these hands, as though He needed anything, because He Himself giveth life and breath and all things to all, and He has made of one common nature all the races of men that dwell on the earth, and has fixed the times of their appearance and the boundaries of their abode, in order that they should seek Him, and feel after Him, if haply they may find Him ; being, as He is, not far from any one of us. For in Him we live, and move, and have our being ; as some also of your own poets have said, “ We are his offspring.” Being then the offspring of God, we surely ought not to think that his nature is like to gold or silver or stone, graven by art or man’s device. The past times of ignorance God hath overlooked ; but now He calls on all men everywhere to repent ; for He hath fixed a day in the which He will judge all the dwellers on earth in righteousness, by that Man whom He hath appointed, of which He hath given proof unto all by raising Him from the dead.’

Now to God, etc.

ENGLISH CHURCH ARCHITECTURE. From the Earliest Times to the Reformation. By G. A. T. MIDDLETON, A.R.I.B.A. Cloth, crown 8vo. 2s. 6d. net. No. 3, The Library of First Principles.

This book is profusely illustrated by many well-executed sketches and measured drawings, which heighten its appeal to every lover of church architecture.

A COMFORT BOOK. By EDITH CHAPMAN. Foolsap 8vo., cloth, 2s. 6d. net. "A Comfort Book" is an unhackneyed selection of thoughts from writers past and present.

"The extracts are well fitted to bring solace and comfort to all who find themselves borne down with the heat and burden of the day."—*Dundee Advertiser*.

THE ROMANCE OF SYMBOLISM. By SIDNEY HEATH. Foolsap 4to., illustrated, 7s. 6d. net. *Ready shortly.*

In this book Mr. Heath attempts to arrange in a simple form the principles of Christian Symbolism as depicted on the large fabrics and the minor details of our churches and cathedrals. Much information is also conveyed respecting the symbolical origin and development of ecclesiastical ornament.

PRIMERS FOR BIBLE STUDENTS:

THE CONVERSION OF JOHN WESLEY. By the late Rev. RICHARD GREEN, with an introduction by T. F. Lockyer, B.A.
No. 1. 6d. net, paper; 1s. net, cloth.

THE BIBLE AS A BOOK. By GEORGE HARWOOD, M.A., M.P. Author of "Christianity and Commonsense."
No. 2. 1s. net, paper; 1s. 6d. net, cloth.

NEWMAN, PASCAL, LOISY, AND THE CATHOLIC CHURCH. By W. J. WILLIAMS. Large crown 8vo., cloth. Price 6s. net.

The purpose of the book is to give, in outline, the philosophic basis of the Liberal Catholic movement. It attempts to show that Liberal Catholicism is founded on the best traditions in Catholic thought.

"Those who desire to get a better understanding of the Liberal Roman Catholic position should read this book."—*Spectator*.

LONDON :

FRANCIS GRIFFITHS, 34, Maiden Lane, Strand, W.C.

LUX HOMINUM. Studies of the Living Christ in the World of To-day. Edited by the Rev. F. W. ORDE WARD, B.A. Large crown 8vo., cloth. Price 7s. 6d. net.

The contributors include Professors A. S. Peake, M.A., B.D., and Allan Menzies, D.D., Principal W. F. Adeney, D.D., the Rev. Hewlett Johnson, B.A., the Rev. H. D. A. Major, M.A., the Rev. S. Lawrence Brown, B.A., and the author of "The Faith of a Christian."

"We owe Mr. Orde Ward much gratitude for bringing together these essays, which give his undertaking real justification, and deserve the attention of all who are interested in the problem of Modern Theology."—*Guardian*.

DIFFICULTIES OF OUR DAY. Sermons delivered in St. Paul's Cathedral. By the VENERABLE ARCHDEACON SINCLAIR, D.D. Price 3s. net.

"No one will read it without feeling that his faith has been strengthened and his vision of God, and things eternal, made clearer."—*Methodist Times*.

"The pulpit of St. Paul's has become again in our day a national institution."—*Guardian*.

THE WORLD'S QUEST. Aspects of Christian Thought in the Modern World. By Rev. F. W. ORDE WARD, B.A. La. crown 8vo., 7s. 6d. net.

Saturday Review—"His pages amply repay study, and will commend themselves to thoughtful people. . . . He has furnished the student, and especially the preacher, with a rich mine of suggestive reading."

THE CATHOLICISM OF THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND. By the Hon. and Rev. JAMES ADDERLEY (Author of "Stephen Remarx," etc.). Crown 8vo., cloth. 2s. 6d. net.

THE SOCIAL PARADISE. A Vade-mecum of Theocracy. By RICHARD DE BARY, author of "A Mystical Fellowship" and "The Spiritual Return."

Scotsman—"This is a book for students of the deeper religious subjects."

MAN : FIRST AND LAST. From Cave Dweller to Christian. By GEORGE ST. CLAIR, Author of "The Secret of Genesis." Demy 8vo., cloth. 9s. net.

LONDON :

FRANCIS GRIFFITHS, 34, Maiden Lane, Strand, W.C.

BR Knight, William Angus, 1836-1916.
85 Things new and old : being Sunday addresses
K6 delivered at Thornton Castle and elsewhere /
by Professor Knight. -- London : Francis Grif-
fiths, 1909.
viii, 213p. ; 20cm.

1. Theology--Addresses, essays, lectures.
I. Title.

4
CCSC/mmmb

A 25916

